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The New Timothy


By William M. Baker



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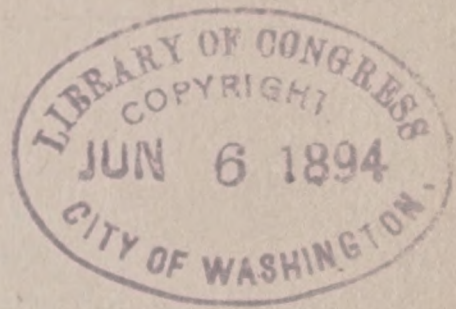
THE NEW TIMOTHY

A Novel

BY ✓

WILLIAM M. BAKER

AUTHOR OF "INSIDE" "THE VIRGINIANS IN TEXAS"
"CARTER QUARTERMAN" ETC., ETC.



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
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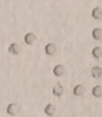
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HARPER & BROTHERS,

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District of New York.

TO
JOHN

THE MOST IMPERFECTLY DESCRIBED OF ALL THE PERSONS IN
THESE PAGES, INASMUCH AS ALL MENTION OF
HER HEREIN FALLS SO FAR BELOW
HER ACTUAL EXCELLENCE

A WORD IN ADVANCE.

ONCE upon a time, years ago, the author turned from fields in many respects more inviting, to labor in one of the newest, as it is the noblest, of the States of the South-west. Residing in the leading city of that State, his duties bore him around that centre through a large and diversified circle of persons and things, in a climate where all is freshest and freest. In the intervals of more important labors he found himself recording, almost unconsciously, the events and the people of the hour. It was as if the paper upon his desk was sensitized, taking photographs of nature around, the writer being little more than the camera, condensing and directing the same into focus.

The author yields to no man in orthodox belief, honest and hearty; and his only hesitation here has been lest some hasty reader should for a moment imagine religion, or any aspect thereof, lightly mentioned in these pages. Yet, even the humblest Luther must risk this when his blows are aimed solely at, and fall wholly upon, that which is purely human in systems and persons connected, and really and truly connected, with our holy religion. In the human, and the human only, lies the imperfect, and, therefore, not perfectly efficient part of the means appointed for the saving of this world. Surely, too great allegiance to the human herein is treason to the Divine!

And the changes for the better, since this volume was written, themselves prove that the effort herein was at least in the right direction.

The author would beg leave to state distinctly that he himself is *not* the Mr. Charles Wall of this book: where every thing else herein is almost literal fact, it would make the volume a fiction indeed to suppose any thing of the kind.

He ventures also to add that he has given himself, since inditing these pages, exclusively to the Profession which he regards as demanding and rewarding every energy he possesses. Yet he ventures to hope that an effort in the same general direction as incidental as this may not be wholly in vain. The Master deigned to accept and use the fishes and barley-loaves of the Apostles, as well as their sufferings and labors in the ministry.

W. M. B.

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THE NEW TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER I.

In which Mr. Charles Wall, but not our Hero, steps upon the Stage.

ALLOW us the pleasure! This is Mr. Charles Wall, this young gentleman, of twenty or so, who sits in the dépôt here this cold morning waiting for the train.

He must be thoroughly chilled, for, unbuttoning his overcoat, he takes the little demon of a stove completely to his bosom, so to speak, warming himself with all its heat. Well thawed at last, he glances around the room to find that there is nothing, not even an obsolete map on the walls, worth looking at. So he goes travelling back again, with his feet on the iron hearth, over the twenty very cold miles of hack riding just accomplished. He is back again in the front pew of the village church. The body by whom he is there and then to be authorized to preach are very much pressed for time, and so the process is somewhat unlike what, for years now, he had pictured to himself it would be. Three pews there are of candidates direct from a course in College and Seminary; quite a mass, and examined in the mass.

“Charles Wall!” and that person takes in turn his stand upon the lower step of the pulpit, painfully too narrow for the purpose. First, a Latin composition. A world of pains, an eternity of time, he has taken with it;

but he reads it rapidly, sonorously, to show, in an incidental way, how familiar he is with that language. Ten sentences only, Cicero warming to his work, when the chairman of the body nods to him Enough! The candidate differs from him decidedly, but yields. Next, the first paragraph of a critical exercise upon an appointed passage of Scripture. Then a few rapid sentences from still a third species of exercise. After this, the first page of his first sermon. That sermon! The choicest paper, the blackest possible ink, the intensest preparation! All of *this* the body will be eager to hear. Alas, no! There is, however, a peculiar emphasis in the "That will do, Sir!" of the chairman. At the instant it indicated to the candidate a profound satisfaction in the sermon; afterwards he is not so sure.

His Rubicon passed, interest in the examination of the rest is singularly lessened; he yawns and sympathizes with the examining body. All of the candidates, at last, are requested to retire; are requested to return. A holier feeling fills the house. Certain solemn questions are asked, and answered from the very heart. Then, in the hushed silence, the oldest minister present offers a prayer which bows the head of each to the very bosom. A short, impressive charge is given, and the candidates leave the church authorized, by a denomination than which none stands higher on earth, to preach.

For one, Charles Wall stands outside the building with a breathless feeling, landed there, as by an instant leap from boyhood, a man! At this point in his reflections our traveller takes his elaborate exercises from his carpet-bag, and dropping them into the stove, hears them roaring up the pipe with keen enjoyment.

"Something better than all that, my boy!" he says, and aloud. Thorwaldsen the sculptor, you know, wept at the

cold feet of his finished Christ, wept to find himself unable to improve line or limb thereof; wept, knowing from this that he could never surpass it.

No train yet. He puts more wood into the stove, as into a locomotive, and goes journeying back, with his feet against it, still farther into the past; re-entering the Seminary left a day or two before, setting out to retread its course, he faces the class with which he came out. A dyspeptic regiment they are! Pale cheeks, slouching shoulders, ungainly bearing, clothing not under-brushed nor over-new. Those ignorant Greeks of two thousand years ago trained their youth for the active duties of life by a course which developed and strengthened body and mind. His Seminary course is admirably adapted to reverse that heathenish plan. As these youth are intended only for ministers of the gospel, you know, a business so much less exhausting to brain and muscle, so infinitely less important than that of, say, Alcibiades or Pericles, it makes no difference!

Therefore not a man of his class has swum a stroke, ridden a horse, taken a ten-foot leap, alas, when? Caring for the soul, rather over-caring than otherwise for the mind, as far as possible the very existence of the body is ignored. Sawed wood? Yes.—Dumb bells? Oh yes; and gone through in set doses at set times.—Walks? Yes, again: and with your fellow-student, arguing every step of the way upon the last theme of the class-room—only a peripatetic variety of constant study. Morning, noon, night, midnight, daybreak: at it again, study, study, only study!

The business of these is with human nature, and from exactly that are they quarantined for years. Rough, roaring human nature; cheating, swearing, gambling, drinking, sinning with all its force the world over. Or smooth and silent human nature; sinning in deeper and deadlier fash-

ion everywhere! In all cases, unbelieving with steady and intense energy the wide world over, in each and every thing, it will be his life's business to convince them of; in them and himself, too, grain and fibre warped and set dead against him and his sacred work. And he is manacled just at the formative period of life, in books, lectures, exercises, examinations, as in fetters felt even in sleep! From his cell in his four-story bastile very faintly indeed did the student hear even the distant murmur of the great world which he is in express training there to influence and utterly change! There is that refectory! Long tables lined with students, never the face of a woman or the voice of a child; thrice a day only students at the necessary duty of eating brown Boston crackers, one each meal, three a day, twenty-one a week, ninety a month, say eight hundred and ten a session—our traveller eats them all over again backward in memory!

His professors there, too; learned, devoted, surpassed by none, living or dead. It is not their fault if the all-compelling institution, steadily, insensibly contracting its walls upon them, had made them Melanchthons rather than Luthers. As the social life is nothing, you know, to a pastor; as you can influence a man most by instructing him only from the desk, and not with his hand in yours, of course it was all right. It was wrong in our hero to doubt whether such a social chasm should have yawned between teacher and pupil, remembering none such between the great Teacher and His disciples; very wrong, and therefore we will not mention it!

No train! And so he recalls the hours spent, as in a dissecting-room, upon truths hitherto held unexamined and as matters of course; hours almost painful, yet leaving him satisfied of evangelical doctrine as of a system whose Maker is indeed God. Those impecunious students, too! He

sees again that poor fellow starving his leanness leaner upon crackers and cheese in his room. That other, shivering at his Hebrew the winter through, his entire wardrobe on for warmth, his bed-covering on over that; no wood if he had a stove, and no stove if he had wood; with more of Satan in him than he dreamed of, in concealing wants which would have been joyfully supplied.

The nights in the Seminary chapel return again. There stands poor Lewis, say, at the desk, delivering to his make-believe church his make-believe sermon of ten minutes; the quill of the presiding professor beside him, writing down each defect in matter or manner as it occurs, with a scratching terribly distinct to the speaker, whom the fiction supposed to be preaching the gospel. The criticising of the sermon, when over, by the congregation, led by the professor from his ample memoranda—a criticising so incongruous with the matter of the sermon, so hilarious to all save the one undergoing the same! There were the jokes, too, of that one of the venerated professors who *would* joke, discharged with prim precision from his desk; the laughter thereat ricocheting all along the line of eaters at dinner thereafter.

Those sermons on the Sabbath, too, by the professors in turn, closely read from MS., but with solemn injunction understood that no student there was ever to read *his* sermon, when he came to preach, on any account whatever. There was that rage for punning, also, which, beginning with one student, infected all the rest—a real mental disease, a grotesque reaction from severe study, a moral measles! The afternoon prayers in chapel, too, the voice of so many men swelling the deep bass; the special supplication thereafter for grace against intellectual self-conceit! And there was—

The train! Carpet-bag in hand our hero hurries along

the cars, peering in at the windows. The expected friend grasps him from the steps and draws him aboard. Burleson his name—Edward Burleson—and he is able to do it, so strong he is, so fresh and handsome. Seated beside him, his luggage deposited beneath his seat, our student (he had forgotten himself for an instant) becomes suddenly very grave and deliberate. Since he has parted from his friend has he not become a clergyman? He doesn't realize it himself yet, but he must impress it on his friend. He must be very careful indeed, now, what he says or does. Burleson wonders a moment, understands it all. "Pshaw!" he says, to himself; "what do I care? Home! Going home! And I wonder whether poor Anna—yes, and how fat *has* Bug got by this time—"

The train rushes southward with them. The fireman can not cram too much pine into the furnace, the engineer can not turn on too much steam! Let the wheels turn, they bear these two, and side by side, towards the beginning of their lives!

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Wall, Jun., preaches his first Sermon.

SO many miles by rail, so many more by steamboat down the river ; so many more by stage. For it is to an inland town in a Southern State—what does it matter to you which?—they journey. How the magnet of home draws as they approach it ! Here is Hoppleton at last ! Rather smaller, it seems, than when they left it for the North and education years ago. And this is the Post-office, with loungers thereabout peering curiously in at the passengers. This is Mr. Burleson's handsome house—handsomest in Hoppleton—at which Edward leaps out to greet his stately mother and Anna, his sister—a little querulous, now, Wall thinks in his rapid glimpse of her face, and Bug, the pet ; other than brown crackers *she* has had, so fat she is. But here is home ! Very near, indeed, to kissing the negro cook, young Wall comes, in the rush and whirl of kissing all the rest swarming from the house to meet him. The same dear aunt, with her knitting in hand as of old, and the velvet touch of her lip as when he left home, oh, ages ago. Laura, too, gardening gloves and sun-bonnet on ; yes, and exactly the same pruning-scissors in hand, of course ! But his uncle ! the hair is thinner and whiter ; no change in the best of all uncles except that : welcoming his nephew, and pressing a little money upon the driver, and tugging at the buckles of the stage-boot, and wondering “how Charles has grown,” all in a breath.

And so they have him into the house—by no means as

fine a house as Mr. Burleson's. All talking together, questioning, laughing—tears, too, if they would confess it! Then supper, at last—nobody really eating, being otherwise so abundantly supplied. The long, long talk till near midnight, after family worship, which is itself a joyful thanksgiving. One hour Charles stands talking in the doorway, candle in hand, even after he starts for his room. The same room as when he was a boy, when the pyramids were a-building so very long ago! They have prayers without him in the morning—so tired, you know—and the singing awakens him. And, in a day or two, it is as if he had been back home at least a year!

“You remind me of Mr. Merkes, Charles,” says Mr. Wall's uncle to him at breakfast the Sabbath morning after this, and at home again. “He comes over here to Hoppleton to assist me at a communion. Sunday morning he is sure to be unwell. ‘Have a cup of hot water, with sugar and peppermint, Brother Merkes,’ I say to him. ‘No, Brother Wall,’ he always replies, shaking his head. ‘It will do me no good. My bowels are always disordered when I have to preach, always!’ I do hope, Charles,” the uncle adds, “that you will not be one of those invalid folks. I do like a man to be strong, hearty, happy in the service of his Master. Have another slice of this beef? help yourself to the toast!” and he continues his own meal with the zest of health and cheerfulness.

“Mr. Merkes, Merkes,” replies the nephew. “I can just remember him. Tall, is he not, sir; thin, rather sour, I mean sorrowful? The one, yes, that had that trouble with his church at Canfield?”

“Yes. He has charge over here, just now, of the Likens church. Never mind Mr. Merkes,” continues the uncle, who is the exact opposite of that gentleman; “eat your breakfast. This is some of your cousin's best cooked rice.

Why will people cook it into a mush? See how separate the grains are!"

Once more up stairs and over that sermon; once again, for Mr. Wall the younger is to preach to-day his first sermon. "Yes, and once again, if I have time," he is saying, when he is called down stairs. Time to go to church. His uncle and aunt have already gone. His cousin Laura gone even before them. John will walk with him. It is very well; any other one must be talked to as he goes, and he wants to think.

So she walks beside him, for that is her sex, even if John is her name; sober as he, a vast deal more erect, in her brown dress, her face worth a look, at least from any other than a youth on his way to preach his first sermon. But it was something odd that of all the world she should have been the one to have accompanied him on that walk—it seemed so, looking back upon it afterwards. For her sex it was a wonder she kept silence so long. It was not until they were in sight of his uncle's church that she spoke—

"Charles, please—"

"Well, John, what is it?"

"Would you like—I beg your pardon—my idea about preaching?" Very modestly said, though.

"Your idea—" He had wrought himself into quite a frame of mind. He was going not only to preach his first sermon, but a very remarkable sermon! Her idea! Little did she know of what a sublime thing it was to preach, at least as he was going to preach! Did ever a girl speak so to Summerfield, say, on his way to church!

"It is only if I was going to preach I would try to feel as if I was going into a room to talk to some friends there about religion. Very solemn, but—but—as if it was only talking to them. That is the way your uncle does."

He can excuse her. True, she had heard preaching, but

never any great orator or preacher! Little she imagined the grandeur, the sublimity—

But they are at the church. And no crowd around it unable to get admittance! We herewith patent the profound discovery that of all men the sensitive man meets most things to bother him. Mr. Wall treads, as he goes down the aisle, leaving John to her fate, upon the rich and sweeping dress of a lady just before him. She turns, and, of all ladies living, it is Miss Louisiana Mills! Him his sermon ballasts from utter upset. Exactly the same person he had left her those years ago; only so *very* much larger!

But he is with his uncle in the pulpit. There is the congregation before him like a pool rippling in the sun, painfully aware of it under his drooped eyelids. Now, if he could only have looked fair and square at them, a man about to speak to men and women merely! Little is he conscious of the services going before. At last his uncle waves his hand to him to proceed, and he rises and takes his text.

But Mr. Wall will please wait one moment while we turn suddenly around upon you, dear reader. Suppose yourself put to hard study at college from sixteen to twenty, all motives of earth and heaven bearing upon you till you grudge an instant's attention to that beast your body beyond what is essential to keeping it upon its legs and going beneath the severe riding of mind and soul. And suppose a continuation of this process from say twenty to twenty-three or four, at a theological seminary; studies doubled in intensity both from their deepening nature and your intensified motives; associations still almost exclusively with students, and students only. Is there no light herein upon the fact that clergymen are invalids to a degree left to your own observation to decide? Scholars?

yes, and able theologians. But how about them as men whose work is to get nearest of all men to other men for God? If you happen to be in some frontier town when a preacher arrives there fresh from such a course, please see for yourself, and if you find such a man in close and cordial influence with the masses, write me, and these words will be eaten with pleasure!

At home, this Mr. Wall, with his congregation! For six years he had hardly ever even seen other than students and professors! He is earnest enough, makes plenty of gestures, but it is all mechanical. He is not speaking to men and women—he is “delivering a discourse.” Starting above the people, he keeps above them all through; with side-trains of thought while keeping the discourse in the condition of being delivered: “I wonder how I am preaching!” “How do they like *that* idea?” “What does my uncle here behind me think of my sermon?” Built like a barrel-organ, every wheel and tooth in exact place, this sermon of his; so that he keeps the crank going, he can say to himself: “Three pages gone, five, ten! Suppose I should turn two leaves at once, what *would* I do? Suppose Louisiana Mills was to faint, must I keep going on?”

The people are very attentive, looking at him as at a performer doing something, with no more reference to what he is saying than he has himself! Very earnest, gestures multiplying like the revolutions of a fly-wheel as the steam gets up, all purely mechanical! Distressingly conscious of this too. His sermon is the sleigh in which he is driving, the congregation being the snow beneath. He can not get out of his sermon and at the people to save his life! He can no more draw rein than could John Gilpin. And now the end of his sermon begins to terrify him; it is nearer every page, and there must be a smash up then! He grasps and sways his congregation! It and

his sermon have complete mastery of him instead—poor fellow. It is a sort of bitter relief to find himself seated, dripping with perspiration, in a corner of the pulpit, his uncle closing the services!

How he dreaded and shrank from the congregation! It is a force, a sort of monster. And it is only good Mr. Ramsey, old Mrs. Robbins, sorrowful Mr. Ewing, rollicking young Hyson, the dry-goods clerk; cheery Mr. Mack, the cabinet-maker; poor Mrs. Marston, in mourning for her little Kate; M'Clarke, to whom all sermons were alike, so that they did not take up too much of the time from the singing, which he led; Mr. Burleson, the banker; Mrs. Burleson, stately and still; Anna Burleson, somewhat overdressed, and having reference to the unmarried youth present; Edward Burleson, whose face the preacher had avoided as a man bearing powder would a torch; Bug, the very fat pet of the Burlesons, wide awake during the first third of the service, fast asleep and held from rolling off the seat only by the steady hold of her mother in the puckers of her dress during the rest. Oh yes! and Josiah Evers, who affected skepticism as one does the wearing of a neck-tie of a fashion later than known to common folks. Issells, too, the miserable tailor, had dropped into an extreme corner, sadly soured, poor Issells, against all the universe in general and religion in particular; Moody, too, the hotel-keeper, and all the rest.

His uncle is as genial as usual; that is all. His aged aunt only says, "My dear boy, and I have heard you preach!" as he assists her up the steps on the return home. As to John, not caring to look at her too closely, the new minister is conscious of a retention about her lips, a kind of guardedness about her eyes. Some positive relief, however, he finds in slipping his sermon, immediately on entering his room, into the fire!

CHAPTER III.

A new Character for the Tragic Muse, truer to Fact than any Cornelia, Goneril, Desdemona, or Lady Macbeth of them all.

“STUFF and nonsense!” says Mr. Burleson senior, at his dinner-table the same day. “‘In the teeth of clenched antagonisms,’ wasn’t that it? ‘Pinnacled upon the dim eminences of holy communings with heaven!’ ‘Drinking nepenthy,’ or something of the sort. ‘Garlanded with glory.’ And his uncle such a sensible man! What is ‘Osphodel?’”

“Asphodel, father,” replies his son Edward, fresher from college. “But only let me—”

“Suppose I was to make an address of that sort to our bank directors; or to the people about our Air Line Road; even about temperance! Sing them a sort of song from paper! Religion is unreal enough already, without making it more so by preaching of that sort!”

“Oh, I like him tho muth,” says Bug at this juncture. “He preathed tho like thinging by-baby, I thlept all the time!”

And all that Edward can plead for his friend is, that he will outgrow and overcome in time his seminary training. “I only wish *I* had his purpose and—you know I’m no Christian,” he adds; “but I thought God helped people that are—taught them!” and much more to the same effect.

“I’ll warrant Edward’s success at the bar,” says his mother, as her handsome son concluded an earnest defense of his friend.

As to Mr. Burleson senior, what is the use of merely saying that he is as practical and methodical in his religion as he is in his bank business and every thing else? Better illustrate it thus: When he united with the church good Mr. Ramsey was church collector. Never a more popular pastor than Mr. Wall the uncle, yet never a more painful duty than that of collecting, in that region, the pastor's salary. As a cross Mr. Ramsey accepted the duty, and towards the close of each quarter his supplications for aid in bearing his cross were touchingly fervent. Nothing did he dislike more heartily than this collecting of church-dues, nothing did he do more faithfully. He approached each subscriber to the salary with a deprecatory air, anticipated objection and excuse, seeing it coming in the eyes of the subscriber long before it reached the lips. He imagined that faces waxed gloomy at his very approach. Yet his pastor must be paid! If, like other and less devoted martyrs, Mr. Ramsey was not drawn and hung, he certainly was quartered most cruelly! The discipline was deepening his piety, but shortening his days. His hair was thinning and whitening, his brow wrinkling, his step faltering, under the heavy cross. The Monday after joining the church Mr. Burleson senior takes Mr. Ramsey's office in hand.

"A church is as much a corporation as an insurance company or a bank; its pecuniary business must be managed in exactly the same way." He not only says but does it, and Mr. Ramsey is evidently growing younger every day.

"I'll tell you, Ned, just when I'll acknowledge that your friend has got sterling sense," this practical father now remarks the same night after supper, as he brushes away the crumbs to make place for the large Bible on the table.

"When will that be, father?"

“The day he is married to Louisiana Mills!”

“Oh, father, how *can* you say so!” is the exclamation of Anna the daughter, some thirty years or so the senior of Bug. Somewhat vehement, too. But the mantel-clock strikes six sharp insisting blows as she exclaims. Punctual to a second, the father reads from the open volume twenty verses exactly, and afterwards offers a prayer of concise acknowledgments of the precise mercies received, with specific statement of others still needed. Mr. Burleson is humble and sincere; but prayer, too, is a business transaction!

“Why, father, how strange! Louisiana Mills!” Miss Anna continues, on the other side of the parenthesis of family worship, and much more protest to the same effect. Mrs. Burleson leaves the room during it in stately displeasure.

“What is it to *you*, Nan?” her father adds, in a tone which conveys unpleasant meaning. He has taken up the *Missionary Magazine*, reserved for Sabbath reading, in his hand, which turns instinctively to the pages of donations, and he glances up the column of figures, as he speaks, to see if the treasurer is correct.

“*Me!* Nothing to me,” says Miss Anna. But she proceeds to tell her father that Louisiana is too rich and too lazy, and too beautiful and too fond of dress, and too much of a vast deal more than we can record.

Whereupon her brother explains that Louisiana is of the exact style of woman to which a student would react from severe study. Besides, she is merely an ideal; Mr. Wall knowing as little really about her as he does of any other human being, especially of her sex. “Miss Loo Mills,” he adds, in conclusion, “is at once the most perfectly beautiful and absolutely silly individual I ever knew!”

“Louisiana is an excellent girl,” begins his sister Anna,

not at all displeased at part, at least, of her brother's remark.

"She's *my* Mith Loo," interrupts Bug just then. "She's tho thoft and fat like me. It's tho nithe to thit in her lap. And she loothes good things to eat jutht like me. Oh, I love her tho muth! And she isn't so croth like sisther Anna."

"Oh lawsy, no!" exclaims Edward at this instant, in such exact imitation of the voice and manner of the lady in question that even Mr. Burleson raises his magazine higher to conceal his smile.

"I'm ashamed of myself," the son adds immediately. "Miss Loo is undoubtedly the loveliest human being I ever saw in my life; only one little lack."

"And what is that?" his sister asks anxiously, for all the affection she would have given to husband and children Miss Anna lavishes, for the time, on her only brother.

"Mind, information, soul, whatever you choose to call it. Beautiful, perfectly so, and that is all!" is the brother's valuable opinion.

"Oh, Edward! How was it, then, you and Loo were talking together so long when she was here yesterday?" asks his sister, and quite cheerfully.

"Conversed? If ever a man tried to I did! Simplified every thing down to baby-talk, and the only reply I could get from her was, 'Oh, Mr. Bur-le-son!' 'Well, I de-clare!' and 'Oh lawsy!' with the sweetest laugh I ever heard!"

"Oh, Edward!" exclaims his sister, who can by no means be truthfully accused of excess either of beauty or laughter.

"I was thinking of Wall the whole time we sat together there on the sofa. Reaction from his polemic, patristic, didactic theology, and all the rest, with a vengeance! Like their hysterical punning there at the Seminary. By-

the-by, where is her brother David now?" he adds, suddenly.

"Don't you know, Edward—don't you remember?" replies his sister, touching her forehead with a jewelled finger.

"Still so? Always was so?"

The sister nods her head, with meaning.

"I once read somewhere," Edward adds, after a pause, "about an exquisitely lovely girl who was— It was a ghastly tale! Perfectly beautiful, and yet—"

"Oh, come now, stop; that will do!" exclaims their father, suddenly, laying down his magazine. "There's enough of that. I'm ashamed of you! Besides, you forget it is the Sabbath. Be a little more profitable in your conversation;" and, drawing the candle nearer, he looks up the legacies to the cause in the magazine in question.

There is a silence of some minutes.

"What a queer little, sweet little—child, girl, young lady, which is it?—she has grown to be!" says the brother, permitting at last his thinking, with his eyes in the fire, to take words.

"What? Louisiana? If you call her little—"

"I am not speaking of her. We have exhausted her. I am speaking now"—the brother deliberately adds, in a forensic manner, as much affected in the law-school this only son had just left as is skepticism by Josiah Evers. Who of us but wears some peculiarity exactly as one does a breast-pin! "John, is it? John what? and John how?" he continues.

"Oh, I don't know! Mrs. Wall, or Laura Wall—somebody—told me all about it long ago. I've forgotten how it was. Sudden death," Miss Anna vaguely explains, "of father and mother. Something about a cruel aunt somewhere, I've forgotten."

“No relation at all?” Edward asks.

“None at all! Oh, you know those Walls, brother. Just like them. Hardly rich enough to afford it. They love her dearly, and no wonder; we all do, she is such a little— Yes, Easton it is; why, John, I’m sure I don’t know.”

“Such a little—Quaker? What is it? So—demure? Pshaw! one can not express it. Louisiana, now, is a full-blown rose, very beautiful, very fragrant, very rich, but in ten minutes you know her perfectly and forever. But this little moss-rose—”

“Time to go to church,” the father interrupts the son just here. “You are speaking of John. The only girl I would like, out of all Hoppleton, to see a little more of. You should invite her here more; she is getting to be a young lady, and as nice a one as I know. I asked Mr. Wall once if her father had not been once connected with a bank in some way. I had an impression to that effect from something in the child herself, and I was not at all surprised when he said yes. I’m satisfied her mother wrote a beautiful hand.” All of which is more of praise than Mr. Burleson senior has ever awarded a girl of Hoppleton before.

“I would love her more,” Miss Anna adds, as she rises, “only she has a way of never saying any thing about people— The fact is, the child, poor thing, has had some painful history or other, not exactly hardening her, but subduing, quieting. She has fifty times more character than Laura Wall. Poor Laura, dear, good-natured Laura—”

“Take care, Anna, you should respect age!” her brother hastily remarks, and then tingles to the tips of his fingers with vexation at himself, for his sister can not be far from the same age.

And he has only himself to blame for it there the same night after the family have returned from church. Brother

and sister sit together by the fire of the dining-room, the brother smoking a cigar by special permission, for they are rather proud of him than not, proud of the manhood which he is assuming. The sister sits by his side, thinking, silently, her hands lying clasped in her lap before her.

“Did you ever know a poor fellow more brimful of defect than that young Wall of mine! We talk of things being vulcanized, galvanized; and this unfortunate youth,” the brother says, with energy, evidently trying to stave something else off, “has been so thoroughly seminarianized it will take whole years—”

But here the sister suddenly lays her head upon her brother's shoulder and breaks into a passion of weeping. The brother smokes steadily on, disconcerted, but powerless. Such long, long letters from his sister for years now, while North at that law-school; letters crossed, recrossed, blotted with these same tears; letters left unread, sometimes unopened; letters answered jokingly, answered angrily, answered argumentatively, not answered at all.

“Why, Anna, I am astonished at you!” he says at last.

“Oh, Brother Edward, it is so hard to bear! Poor, poor me!” she sobs, utterly pitiful in her misery.

And angry at her, pitying her, loving her, despising her; keenly sympathizing with her, too, more than he will acknowledge even to himself; yet what can he do? He could give her medicine if she was sick, money if she was poor, advice if she was in doubt. He could kick a dog if it barked at her, could shoot a man if he insulted her. “You have every thing in the world, Anna,” he attempts at last. “The best home in Hoppleton, garden, piano, books, company, health, wealth. You have a good father and mother, and a brother—such as he is. And there is dear little Bug—”

“I can't bear it!” weeps the sister, paying no attention.

"It's *killing* me! Every body except *me*! What have I done? I *hate* visiting and housekeeping and making new dresses! *Hate* them! New dresses! What's the use my making dresses when nobody cares a cent for me, or how I look? I've tried to love Bug instead; six months ago I began. She's a perfect pest in the house. I can't love her! I *won't* love her! She wears me to death with her eternal frolic. She says things to people that come here—heartless little wretch! And Ma almost hates me, she says—as if *she* didn't get married. And Pa has no more feeling, can no more understand than that clock! It's all a weary round day after day; and what for? What does God treat me so for? I only want to be like other women!—only to have my own home and chil—I want something to love, to live for! I hate every thing!"

And she ceases weeping, and lifts her head from her brother's shoulder in excess of feeling.

"Quiet, Anna; quiet, quiet," is about all her brother can say; but adds the moment after, as a happy thought, "Why, look at Laura Wall! I never saw a happier woman in my—"

"Because she has no more spirit than a cat! We're different! Easy to *say* quiet! It's only mortification, mortification all the time!" the sister adds, with cold misery in tones and tearless eye.

"But think of all you escape, Anna," reasons her brother, hopelessly. "Sickness in the family, trouble with your husband, perhaps—"

"I'd take it all gladly! Measles, scarlet-fever, whooping-cough, teeth—I'd rather have a husband that got drunk and beat me—something to love!"

"Well, love me, Anna, I love you—"

"For how long? Till you get a wife to love and be loved by. Then what will you care for *me*! I hate to

live here with Pa and Ma. When you get married I won't live with you—I won't, I *won't* do it! I'll kill myself some day! I wish I was dead this minute—”

By a singular coincidence Mr. Wall senior is that very moment saying to his daughter as she kisses him good-night,

“That poor unhappy girl! Thank God, Laura, you are so different! And thank God, the world over, no lovelier, nobler, more devoted women live than are found in her—class is it? and yours!

“Ours is a somewhat dull town, if you will not whisper it,” Mr. Wall continued. “All our work, certainly all *her* work is done by the negroes; nothing on earth to occupy her but the seeing that her dresses are properly made. God made us to do something—and she is doing nothing! In that far-away time when squabbles among the denominations shall cease and—possibly—perhaps”—voice lowered to a whisper—“slavery shall somehow be done away with here in the South—who knows but work may be found for women too. But God casts our lot not in the millennium but in to-day and in this little inland town, all post-oak and cotton plantations, in the South—”

But just at this point the familiar bell rings for family worship.

CHAPTER IV.

We make the Acquaintance—under his solemn Protest, however—of Mr. Merkes.

THIS Monday afternoon the Rev. Charles Wall sits by the fireside in company with John and—worth fifty thousand cargoes of Johns—"The Analysis of the Will." He is reviewing the passages marked by him therein for reperusal, putting in his thumb, in fact, and pulling out the plums—somewhat stony—of this Christmas Pie. Coming home, on the railroad, upon the steamer, even in the stage, had he read at this same excellent but somewhat tough treatise. Nothing but an ever-varying landscape, and merely men, women, and children about him—no time to waste on them! He has extracted a particularly important one, and leaning back in his rocking-chair—that cradle for grown-up babies—is obeying my Lord Bacon and inwardly digesting the same. But oh, that some angel would whisper to him and his whole class that no human being but is a volume too, richly worth at least an occasional study! If any such angel hovered near, it wisely took the guise of John, sitting on the other side of the fire-place—an easy transformation for the angel!

As he rocked to and fro, his half-closed eyes upon his companion, he grows aware of the fact that her head, bent over her sewing, resembles that of the "Greek Slave," which he had seen, with hushed lips, a few weeks before, in New York: oval contour, straight nose, curved lip, clear brow, hair gathered into a simple knot behind—how won-

derfully like ! A reminder of the marble, too, in the hue and repose of this work of art also ; none of the glow and gorgeousness of Louisiana Mills, with whom he had spent the morning—Venus in contrast to this Diana ! How fresh and pure and sweet and quiet !

Here the Greek Slave raised its eyes to learn, with a blush suffusing all its marble, how it was being criticised, and to obtain the valuable information :

“ Why, John, you will be really beautiful ! ”

The eyes fall upon the sewing of the busy hands, to rise again to his, calm and full :

“ Much obliged to you. What do you mean ? ”

A pleasant smile, too, but no ringing laughter ; there’s where Louisiana had the advantage of her !

“ Beg your pardon ! How old are you ? ”

“ Older than I seem—nearly sixteen. ”

“ In school still, I suppose ? But no, for to-day is Monday. ”

“ No. I closed the course at our Seminary here just two weeks before you returned. ”

“ And what next ? ”

“ I do not know. ”

And it is a shade this time which flits across the pure face. Thereupon Mr. Wall junior kindly examines her upon the nature of her studies. The Botany therein reminds him, he tells her, of the meeting held by his class at college to demand release from lectures on the same. “ Botany is for females, ” the committee appointed thereat had urged upon the Faculty in their request for lectures, instead, upon Political Economy. “ Yes, but Political Economy is for men ! ” had been the instant reply from the professor who said satirical things. His foot on college and seminary heather, he has an hour’s interested conversation with her.

“You know they always said in their letters, ‘John is well as usual;’ or, ‘John sends her love;’ or, ‘We couldn’t get along without John;’ and the like. You have grown so! Would you like me to teach you Latin?” For it dawns upon him that it will be a great kindness to mould and form her mind, so fresh it is, and plastic! And another hour is given to discussion of this project.

“Above all things I would like to know—”

“Mr. Merkes!” John interrupts him, rising quietly from her seat as a gentleman enters the room. “Mr. Merkes, this is Mr. Wall.”

In the millennium people will say, when they meet, exactly what they think. “Mr. Merkes! Tall, thin, austere—my very idea of a professor of the higher mathematics!” is what Mr. Wall, in that case, would have said. “And you are that nephew your foolish uncle has told me so much about! An uncle’s absurd partiality; just as I suspected!” would have been Mr. Merkes’s salutation; only, in the millennium, our very thoughts about each other will be, and justly, congratulations. As it is, Mr. Merkes takes no particular interest in his young friend. He has so many troubles! And he shows none—merely takes a seat a little apart.

“I will let my uncle know that you are here,” says Charles Wall, and is too far outside the room to catch Mr. Merkes’s slow remark:

“No, you need not. He is not at his study. I will wait for him.”

“How have you been, Mr. Merkes?” asks John, when the silence is growing too long. Save when his wrongs are the topic, silence incrusts Mr. Merkes like ice; averse to conversation, on the general principle of being averse to pretty much every thing.

“Not well, Miss. My health is, I may say, never good,” is his reply.

"No special sickness since you were here last?" asks John, with interest in her eyes.

"No, Miss, no. I am generally unwell."

And unless every line of his face lied he certainly was, though no man ever had a more iron constitution. And chronic his complaint is. No baby had ever been so ill-used from his very birth; his rattles came to pieces perversely just to annoy him; his cradle only jolted him; the chairs tripped him; the floors smote him. The conspiracy thickened against him as he grew up; his ball fled from him in spite; his books hid themselves, whenever he started for school, to get him a whipping; molasses withheld its due sweetness, pudding its sufficient quantity, out of sheer malice. His brothers bothered him; his sisters worried him; his parents were far from being, at least to him, what parents should have been. Teachers and schoolmates but swelled the cabal against him. Emerging into the world he found it—as he expected!—but an arena full of personal foes. Yet, with all this, Mr. Merkes has veins of gold all through the quartz of his character, driven therein as by the fiery force of his religion, which is pure and sincere.

"The children are well, I hope?" John again breaks the rapidly congealing silence.

"Samuel has been quite ill, I believe; Mary was threatened with the croup; Alexander is well just now," Mr. Merkes replies.

"And dear little Lucy, Mr. Merkes?"

"Ah, yes; consumptive, I fear." A softening in Mr. Merkes as he says it; harder than most men even then.

"Take a seat nearer the fire," urges Charles, who has now returned and reported the result of his search for his uncle. And Mr. Merkes did seem cold—even in midsummer his appearance betokened frost: genuine piety at

heart ; but one can keep heat as well as flame covered up in that as under a bushel.

Mr. Merkes declined the seat. Whatever an offer was, Mr. Merkes generally did decline. His habitual feeling is No !

“I have often heard my uncle speak of you, sir,” remarks Charles at last.

“Favorably ?” doubted Mr. Merkes to himself, his outer expression being “Ah !”

“When did you arrive ?” he asks at last. “A very unpleasant trip you must have had,” he adds on being informed.

“No, sir ; a very pleasant one indeed.”

“Generally am contradicted,” thinks Mr. Merkes.

“You are well acquainted with Dr. Brown,” his young associate in the ministry ventures after a while. “You will be glad to know that he is well. Fills his chair admirably.”

“Yes ; his book—‘Analysis of the Will,’ I believe they call it—obtained him the place. I tried to read it once. It seemed to make a great parade of learning !” And in the same way Mr. Merkes acknowledges that Dr. Johnston may be of a lovely character but not of much force. “His Inaugural was the poorest thing I ever saw. He was no more fitted for his chair than I am,” adds Mr. Merkes.

“On the contrary, he does admira—” begins Charles. “I beg pardon !” he blushes and corrects himself, “I mean he is quite successful.”

Mr. Merkes is used to buffeting ; he takes it patiently. But he is no whit swept away by the young man’s enthusiasm for old Dr. Ivison, either.

“More peevish, however, as he grows older, I fear,” is all his comment thereupon.

“They tell me the Institution is becoming very rich,”

Mr. Merkes remarks, after quite a silence ; “at least something of the kind was trumpeted in the papers. False, I suppose ; statements generally are. Rich men suppose they can buy heaven that way. They may find themselves mistaken.”

In the same strain Mr. Merkes is sure the new chapel being built there will lead to extravagance. But just here the front gate is heard falling to. A quick step along the gravel, and Mr. Wall senior enters the room.

“Ah, Brother Merkes ! Glad to see you !” He greets his visitor cordially and as with both hands ; a burst of sunshine upon an iceberg, the glow in return is only reflected. “Glad to see you—glad to see you !” continues the new-comer, laying aside hat, cane, and overcoat. “This is my nephew. Tall isn’t he ? Draw nearer the fire. How have you been ?” For if Mr. Merkes is winter, his host is summer—yes, and autumn.

Mr. Merkes waits while his host punches the fire vigorously. The animation of that individual enlivens yet exhausts Mr. Merkes. His perpetual protest against it fatigues him. The very high standing of his brother in the ministry, his wonderful success, which Mr. Merkes can not fully account for, make it incumbent that he shall be doubly on the alert not to yield thereto. It is like walking against the blowing of the south wind. Alas ! when with no one whom he can oppose, Mr. Merkes whirls round upon and opposes himself. In all the world no one whom he opposes and maltreats as severely as he does himself !

“Whether it’s the workin’ of a diseased mind on the man’s body, or a diseased body on the man’s mind, *I* don’t know,” Mrs. General Likens has often remarked to the General, smoking his cob-pipe in his arm-chair. “But he’s a good man for all that !” the same lady always says, after an hour or so of speech upon the same point. “A most an

excellent man!" she even adds with considerable emphasis, by way of apology for any thing said by her to the contrary.

"All well, I suppose, with you?" Mr. Wall senior adds, in continuation of his greeting, rubbing his hands cheerfully together before the fire.

"About as usual," is the reply; leaving the impression that the usual course is far from joyous. "No, nor any thing of special interest in his church."

Mr. Ramsey, who has recently visited the General Likens neighborhood in which Mr. Merkes resides, has given us in Hoppleton a wonderful account of the singing there, Mr. Wall informs Mr. Merkes.

"And had nothing to say of my sermon. Of course!" is Mr. Merkes's thought. He says only: "Yes; it is loud, and, I believe, correct. Whether they are making melody in their hearts to the Lord, though—" Solemn silence.

"Mr. M'Clarke, who leads your singing, does not even profess religion?" he asks.

"Oh yes; for years has done so," Mr. Merkes is informed.

"I feared not, from his excessive interest in your singing. Reminds me of the theatre." And Brother Merkes regrets the undue levity of the children in Mr. Wall's Sabbath-school; greatly fears the whole church is in a state of decline, sorrowfully refusing to accept Mr. Wall's theory thereupon of seed-time as well as harvest.

"And how is Mr. Long doing?" his host asks at last—hopefully, too.

"The very singular person they call Brown Bob Long? For the present I *know* nothing against him. I expect every day to hear that he has gone back to his desperate courses. I generally avoid him. On two occasions he

squeezed my hand so hard on meeting me as to render a poultice necessary. I confess I have but little faith in him."

"Nor have I! Not a particle! But I do have in his Master to help him stand," Mr. Wall makes answer. At which Mr. Merkes is very justly and deeply offended.

"And Mrs. General Likens?" asks his host, after a pause.

"Her general health is good, sir," Mr. Merkes replies. "At least so far as I know. Her intellect I regard—I think all do—as utterly unsettled in reference to what she calls her poetry. It makes her a positive nuisance!" Mr. Merkes adds, with gray heat, stung suddenly by remembrance of his cruel sufferings in connection therewith.

Will some one please write and say how it was? Mr. Wall senior flowing evenly along like some munificent river, broad, deep, bright, making all his course that much the greener and more beautiful. And this other flowing with narrow thread among the obscure places of the world, perpetually fretting among pebbles, striking hopelessly against rocks, tumbling wounded and protesting over continual falls all along. Temperament? Circumstance? What?

"Oh, we are perfectly agreed at heart, Brother Merkes," Mr. Wall remarks at last, rising from his seat—he never can remain seated long. "And now I've got a favor to ask of you; I'm glad I thought of it. Please ask my nephew here to preach for you."

"Oh, uncle!" exclaims that nephew, while even John colors a little. Mr. Merkes slowly considers the proposition, having advantage of them all therein.

"Have you any special reason therefor, uncle?" asks the nephew, somewhat aware of the length of Mr. Merkes's reflections.

"Yes, I have. If Brother Merkes will be so kind!" is

the reply. Mr. Merkes looks up. Some conspiracy against him !

“Next Sabbath I preach against that wretched Ishmael Spang, by appointment,” he says finally. “Your nephew can come the Sabbath after. Some of the people may have some curiosity to hear him.”

“Thank you. Now come to my study, Brother Merkes,” his host says, walking towards the door. “We’ll leave these young people to themselves.”

“My company not being agreeable to them !” thinks Mr. Merkes, eternally haunted, and by his own ghost at that !

Miss Louisiana Mills is at supper, when, a few evenings after this, it is announced to her that young Mr. Wall has called and awaits her in the parlor. Now Miss Loo had eaten almost nothing since dinner, and there were rice batter-cakes for supper. Presume not to judge in her case if you have never had upon your plate such cakes—soft, light, the delicate white as delicately browned, well buttered, a dish of honey not six inches from your plate ; and similar batter-cakes continually from the kitchen, each supply hotter, softer, lighter, better browned and buttered than the last. Miss Loo sees no pressing necessity of leaving the table instantly. Mr. Wall can wait a little.

Mrs. Mills comes in to him at last, shakes hands, gives an incidental pull at each of the very handsome curtains, says Loo will be in presently, asks after his “people,” and vanishes. Door opens again—Colonel Mills ! No one more cordial than the globular Colonel. Not a richer, happier, more cordial household in all Hoppleton. And you would never dream it of the Colonel, who sinks into an arm-chair, filling it full as one does a mug with ale, his white waistcoat and ruffles answering very well for the

foam; but the unanimous opinion of that community is that the Colonel and his household are, in reference to any and to every thing outside their family circle, the "closest people"—strong emphasis on *closest*—in the world! It is only that they have so decided a sense of the necessity of enjoying themselves as to be unwilling, very naturally, to abate in any way their means of doing this by expenditure upon others.

"And, lawsy! what did you *talk* to the people so for last Sunday?" Miss Loo is saying to her visitor half an hour later.

"I don't understand you, Miss Loo," Mr. Wall replies; but in his soul he is saying, "you are undoubtedly the most beautiful woman now alive!" groaning over it none the less.

"Why, don't you know? lawsy!" A peal of laughter. "That other Sunday you *preached*; but this last time you *talked* to us so; it sounded so funny. Lawsy!" Another ringing laugh followed.

Let patience have its perfect work, dear reader, while we pause to explain. The Saturday before this visit Mr. Charles Wall happens to spend the evening with his friend Edward Burleson. After much conversation between them, Miss Loo being herself *magna pars quorum*—

"By-the-by, Wall, to-morrow is Sunday," said Burleson. "You are to preach in the morning for us. Going to give us another essay on religion?"

"I don't know what you mean," said the young minister, very gravely.

"Oh, yes, you do. You've got an elaborate composition upon some passage of Scripture in your drawer at home, all very accurately written out. Over and over again have you trimmed and pruned it. You've put in just as many fine things as you possibly could. You've gone over it

with the pumice-stone till it is as smooth, and cold, and hard as marble. Look here, my dear fellow, you say you know and believe really and truly in the living facts of God and man, and Christ between the two—hell and heaven beyond—is that the way to tell these facts to men?”

“And you would have me stand up and pour out whatever comes first?”

“Your sermon is the explaining and urging some passage of Scripture, isn’t it?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Having written a sermon on the passage, you understand its meaning, do you?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, why not just *tell* people its meaning? In your sermon you spread that out in a sort of language—Pulpitese—Sermonano—whatever you may call the dialect—such as men and women never use to each other when talking about wheat and calico, bread and butter, sickness and health, marriage, and love, and death. The whole subject of religion is vague enough to men anyhow—unreal. And you lift it still higher above people’s heads—make it still more unreal, unhuman, by the way you present it. I’ll tell you, Wall, I’ve heard sermons by great preachers that reminded me exactly of the jargon of some doctors in a sick-room. They can’t give a bone, a fibre, a vein, an organ of the body, a disease, a medicine by its plain name, but must wrap it about in rounding syllables. Only, it is with *souls*, instead of bodies, that ministers have to do. What awful quackery! Stunning perishing sinners with a summer-thunder of long words, lulling men that are to be devils or angels forever with the monotonous rippling of smooth syllables. Why don’t the man talk to men—*talk* to them, I say, about the terrible realities of the case.

Surely, it was this Christ did ; and read the way the apostles addressed the people. This is what I meant when I said I would rather preach than do any thing else. It seems to me I could *show* the people what swine they were, so occupied with the body and so forgetful of the soul, so intensely interested in men and so utterly unconscious of God. I feel as if I could grasp them so, as with the naked hand, shake them, force them, compel them to open their stupid eyes, and look up from their acorns a little!" and Burleson's cheek glowed with feeling as he spoke.

"And your own heart dead to it all! But there is a great deal in what you say," said Wall, with deep interest.

"Thank you. If I only could. I'm afraid—"

"Suppose, when you got into the pulpit you found you had lost your sermon, what would you do?"

"No danger ; last Sabbath I felt my breast-pocket, to be sure it was there, twenty times on the way to church. My heart, brain, soul were all wrapped up in that roll of paper. I had no existence for the occasion out of it."

The next morning was a bright Sabbath, cold, clear. As much to gratify Burleson—for whom he had the warmest attachment—as for any thing else, the young minister arranged, according to agreement, to get to his friend's office half an hour before service. Sure enough, he found a good fire on the hearth—a pitcher of fresh water on the table—no one to interrupt him. Yet once again he went over his precious manuscript. There was evidently going to be a large attendance at church. His uncle, too, preached in the country in the morning, so all the service from first to last would devolve on him. He felt in a frame of mind more calm and natural than the Sabbath before. As the clock over the mantel indicated the hour of beginning near at hand, he thrust the folded sermon into his breast-pock-

et. The ringing of the last bell, and a knock at the door at the same instant, raised him to his feet. He unlocked the door to admit Burleson.

"I will walk with you to church," said Burleson. "It's time—come—ah! let me brush your coat, the collar." And he did so carefully, amid the thanks of his friend. "A glass of water, Wall; it will clear your throat—now come, we are a little late." It was but a few moments, and Wall found himself again in the pulpit—this time, alone. He felt the better for it—thrown more on himself. The church was filled. He arose, offered the opening prayer, gave out the first hymn. Seated, as they began to sing, he took the large Bible off the cushion, opened it on his lap exactly in the middle, felt in his breast-pocket for his sermon—it was gone! One moment of entire paralysis—body and mind. But M'Clarke led the singing loud, and clear, and with an enjoying sense of six verses to come. His enjoyment of this fact was nothing to that of the minister in the pulpit; but for this he would have—he knew not what! He tried in vain to recall even the text—all was a dead blank. Should he beckon to some one to go and hunt for his sermon? Should he slip down and go and get it himself? The ridicule; the anguish! It was temporary insanity! Suddenly the fact flashed upon him—Burleson had purposely taken his sermon in brushing his coat! It was monstrous, he would never again speak to him while he lived! he had half an idea of exposing him to the congregation on the spot. But it was light upon his darkness. Two verses of the six gone! "Very well, Mr. Burleson—very well—I'll show you, sir!" It was his pride rallying to his aid—but there is help promised, he thought—and he bowed his head on the Bible and sought it sincerely—keeping aware all the time, however, of how the hymn was being expend-

ed—a grain of gold every word. By the fifth verse he remembered the chapter from which his text was taken. As the last syllable of the hymn died in the air, he had the chapter ready—rose and read it. Midway he came upon his text—put his finger on it with a painful pressure, and kept it there. This was the text from which he was to address the people—so he read the rest of his chapter as if it were addressed to the people too—gaining assurance and ease at every verse. Then a prayer, rising clearer and stronger in manlier accents than he had ever prayed in public. When he closed, he and the people were nearer together by far than before. He felt at ease—even a species of cheerful strength. Then he gave out the second hymn—only five verses, when he might have made it seven, and took his seat. With half-closed eyes he endeavored to recall the first sentence of his sermon—impossible—he threw it altogether out of his mind—laid hold on the text instead. The moment to begin found him entirely ready. Rising, with his eyes on the congregation, he announced his text and proceeded to explain its context—then its own meaning in the order of its ideas. As he proceeded his anxiety vanished—he became interested in the people before him and in making them understand exactly what the passage meant. He became earnest with the swelling thought of the passage—held the people with his eye, with the waving of his hand. Once or twice he rose even into eloquence—as he would have done conversing on the same theme with Burleson in his office. In fact, he was conversing with his audience—nothing more. Not a person there that did not follow him in what he had to say to the end. Then the prayer, hymn, benediction—and it was all over. He had been with the people all through the sermon—there was no barrier between them after its close—none of that morbid, fearful shrinking, as on the first Sab-

bath, from a phantom, an unreal something. No, there was Mr. Ramsey waiting to shake hands, and Mr. Burleson, senior, and several others. He came down from the pulpit, not as from a mystic summit above his audience altogether. No separation had yawned between them and him there as before. He had spoken, in an entirely natural, common-sense manner, important and common-sense truths.

And it so happened that the text involved the explanation and enforcement of one of the most absolute doctrines of religion—in the opinion of Mr. Josiah Evers, the schoolmaster. At the opening of the discourse, Mr. Evers had arched his brows and uttered an internal heigho! of pity a little overwearied, politeness taxed a little too much, you know. Somehow, however, he had been carried away with the speaker—on and on in the successive statements based on Scripture, confirmed by reason—it was like one of his scholars reciting the multiplication table to him, and he powerless to deny each successive statement. “I say, Josiah, look here”—was his thought as he walked rapidly home after church,—“suppose that some of these old notions *should* be so, after all—suppose—suppose—heh?” At dinner, however, he was none the less pityingly polite, kindly contemptuous in his manner when the sermon came upon the table with the rest of the meal. “Ye-es—ye-es—quite well for so young a preacher—do very well—*very* well!”

But, to return to Mr. Wall and Miss Mills.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Charles Wall ventures into a Mohammedan Paradise.

AND, by-the-by, you are a member of the church, Miss Loo?" he asked, after a while, and in his lightest manner.

"Oh dear no! *Me?* Oh lawsy, no!" But without the laugh; in as frightened a manner as if she had been invited to embark in a balloon.

"I am so sorry you didn't like my sermon," he adds, hastily, to undo his mistake, and in a still lighter manner. For she is so very beautiful!

"Oh, I never *said* so. Lawsy, no!"

What rich, ringing laughter! And so beautiful! Nor does half an hour more of conversation avail to obtain for her visitor even a pin's head, in all her exclamation and laughter, upon which he can hang even the frailest substance or meaning. She is only a very large little girl. But so beautiful!

"What a singular name, Louisiana—Louisiana! How did they happen to call you that?" he asks at last.

"Oh, I was born on Pa's sugar-plantation there, you know. And oh, the syrup we used to eat there warm from the kettles!" So amusing.

"They could not have given you a better," her lover says, thinking of the sugar-cane and oranges, and the heavy moss swinging in the slow breeze there over the universal level; with dim remembrance, too, of the monotony there, and malaria. Because he *is* her lover. He

was that when he left Hoppleton a boy, years ago ; and none other than she his Dulcinea during all his career, with never a Sancho Panza beside him, while away.

And Miss Louisiana is smoothing a ribbon between her sleepy fingers, and—is so beautiful ! She is just risen from a most satisfactory supper ; is richly dressed, jewelled, and perfumed ; is in perfect health, very rich, not a care in the world. If she does not actually purr with satisfaction as she sits upon the velvet cushions of the sofa, it is not because she is not in the mood to do so.

Plenty of offers has Miss Loo had. But she is a perfectly obedient daughter, and those pecuniarily desirable have been a little too undesirable in respect of drink, horses, cards, and the like, for Colonel Mills. His one condemnation being, “No, Loo ; he will spend every cent of your money !” She has only, in such case, to say to the ardent swain, “Oh lawsy, no ! The idea !” and the silver peals therewith have rung requiems to many a confident attempt on her heart, hand, and fortune. Although it is only her father who speaks through her lips on such occasions, just as it is only Professor Pentzmenkey, her music master, who plays through her fingers when she is at the piano !

And Miss Loo is such unspeakable and delightful reaction from the Seminary course. Only, if he does indeed succeed in winning her, Mr. Wall feels that it will be like coming suddenly into possession of a wax doll of the largest pattern—and what to do with it !

“Do let me hear you play,” he says at last, in desperation for a topic. And Miss Loo seats herself at the superb piano, places before her the first page of music which comes to hand, and grants his request.

No pains nor money had been spared to instruct Miss Loo ; but it was severe work. Pentzmenkey earnestly

desired to make money; it is the only thing that holds him to it. In her case he fairly earns his money. Standing behind her as she sat at her lessons, his voice is persuasion, but his face is wrath. During her serene persistence in every possible blunder, a thousand times corrected, he grasps his mustache as a sort of rein by which he holds himself in. She couldn't understand it at all, and she didn't! Three days of the week, one hour each day, he makes honest effort thereat, more than exhausting his English. He stops, hideously profane—but in German, and under his breath,—while Miss Loo sits still, her fair fingers slumbering on the keys, perfectly cheerful, waiting for him to go on. She has nothing else to do, and she takes lessons for years. Pentzmenkey ceases even to pour out his soul to his wife on the subject, gets used to it—is not “Mees Meels” a standing income to him! In time she learns to play certain tunes—very beautifully, too; but it is only Pentzmenkey, at last, playing them by her—a sort of mechanism from long-continued rote, worked by him even when his hand is for the moment off the crank.

“Oh, I'm so glad he's gone!” Miss Loo remarks with a yawn to her mother, intruding into that lady's bedroom and wakening her out of a sound sleep, when the deluded visitor is at last departed. “I thought he never would go, I was so sleepy. Besides, I'm dying for a little more of that delicious jelly-cake. Where are the keys, Ma?”

“She is so very beautiful!” the visitor groans to himself as he walks home—“so exceedingly beautiful!” Now the Margaret whom Faust so violently loved was not beautiful at all—only a coarse peasant girl, toughened and hardened and bronzed by unceasing drudgery from morning till night. As Mephistopheles remarked when he gave Faust the witch's broth, it would make him imagine the next woman, whoever she was, a Venus. And though this

poor young fellow was intoxicated too, his Margaret was, beyond all doubt, an exceedingly beautiful woman. But people somehow always yielded that to Miss Loo as with a groan.

It is as the sun is setting, a week after this, behind General Likens's orchard, that Charles Wall drives up to the front gate of the general's place, having John seated beside him in his buggy, the General himself, who has escorted them from Hoppleton, riding upon his invariable roan behind.

"We'll let the men have the parlor to themselves, child, while we stay here at the table and have a good talk." It is Mrs. General Likens who says it, the same evening after supper. "Deary me, I'm so glad to see you, to be sure! Do try an' eat a little more, while I wash up the cups and saucers; you've eat no supper at all. Have a hot biscuit? Let me fill your cup again? No? You really won't? Well, draw nearer the fire—Moll, get some more kindlin'—an' I'll turn a little so as I can see you while I wash up. How well you do look, to be sure!"

CHAPTER VI.

In which Charles Wall and John Easton ascend Parnassus.

JUST here! One of the manifold defects of Mr. Charles Wall—not our hero, and we will represent him as human as he was—consisted in not caring for landscape. Place him in a gallery of art, and, unless it is Alps, Yosemite, or Niagara, he passes rapidly over all specimens of mere wood, and plain, and water, in search of pictures involving men and women—the kings, you know, and queens of all these. It is an inland state of the south-west in which he is now abiding. All the way from Hoppleton merely post-oak and sands up hill and down quite unromantic dale; here and there gullies have been washed open by the rains, and lie like raw wounds between the road and the fields of what was corn or cotton. Negroes, under fostering care of the ever-present overseer, are engaged in breaking down the stalks of corn or cotton plant, and heaping them in piles for burning. There is a profound emblem of the perpetual procession of destruction going before creation in all this, only the little negroes are not aware of it as they run with flaming torch from pile to pile. Except to keep Mike, his new horse, from scaring, Mr. Wall pays no heed to these scenes common to him from his birth. In fact, he is imparting valuable information on quite a variety of topics to his companion; not understanding himself why he would rather General Likens should not ride quite so close behind. Landscape? No sir; life is all Aristotle, and *à priori* to him; Verulam, *à posteriori*, and sense not yet!

Please like Mrs. General Linkens, dear reader. Every body did who knew her. For any respectable person to have lived in the county and not to have been at the General's would have been a wonder. Somehow, without dreaming of such a thing, you were certain, by a sort of fate, to stop, in passing, at the well in the front yard for a drink. Next you found yourself sitting in a hide-bottom chair, its wood scoured to whiteness, in the long front piazza of the house. Then, there you were at the table, as if you had lived there all your life, eating and listening to Mrs. General Likens. Ten to one you found yourself at last—at a late hour, too—in the best bedroom, well tucked in under the red stars of the best quilt, smelling so of lavender—Mrs. General Likens's broiled chicken and light biscuit sitting well on your stomach, but Mrs. General Likens's voice ringing still in your ears.

There was actually something of the Web of the Spider about that low-roofed homestead. But I would be ashamed of myself if I mentioned, in connection with such a metaphor, that Mrs. General Likens was always spinning long threads from a humming wheel in the back-shed room, standing beside it the tallest, thinnest lady, her outstretched arm reaching farther, her fingers holding the thread the longest ever known; or else she was seated on a low rocking-chair in the front piazza, knitting long blue stockings, with the thread of yarn stretching away to the ball lying yards off on the thoroughly-scoured floor. Nor do I intend to add, in such connection, that Mrs. General Likens had any nose and chin at all—their length, and that of her tongue too, forbid any allusion to them whatever. Mrs. General Likens spun habitually other lines, also; longer than all these tied together—lines of poetry! It would be improper, having alluded to a spider's web, to state that the General was short and stout, and local

when in the house—his wife around and around him all the time, he perfectly still in his arm-chair, either at table, by the fire, or on the front piazza—because this and his blue jean trowsers, very full in the seat, might suggest an idea of a bluebottle fly. Let all such vain fancies be discarded; for only once get well acquainted with the General and his wife, and you know of none whom you respect more highly.

“And you’ve been so long a-coming, too, child,” continued Mrs. General Likens, as she washed and wiped the cups and saucers, with a towel thrown over her left shoulder, three yards long at least. “I expected you when we had strawberries; then when the raspberries came; then when we had melons. I was certain you would be here in peach-time. I’ve been real hurt, and when you knew your mother, too, was—stayed—”

“Oh, Mrs. Likens,” interrupted John, “I’ve wanted to come. But you know how it is. Mr. Wall does not keep any carriage. Even if he did, I had no one to come with me.”

“Mrs. *General* Likens, I’m usually called, my dear, though you needn’t mind about that. Yes, but when Mr. Wall—the uncle, you know—came at our communion that time, what a blessed meeting it was! I never heard any body preach like him in all my life. You ought to have seen the General. He sat there on the front seat at church still as a stone, a-drinking in every word. Preaching three times a day for a week, we had. We all only wished it was six times a day, and meeting protracted forever. Our James, you know, made a profession then. He couldn’t bear Mr. Merkes. ‘Too sour for me, Ma,’ he would say, and make a face all wry like, as if he had bitten a green persimmon. In spite of myself, I’d laugh. But Mr. Wall! From the first sermon he preached James listened for his

life. I'd been praying for him—you know he was our only child—for years. I'd a kind o' hope in Mr. Wall's coming. His preaching had been so much blessed everywhere else, I said to myself, 'Who knows? who knows?' and prayed special for James. When I saw him listen so I felt some hope; but when I tried to talk to him he said, 'Not now, Ma, if you please,' so grave like I hushed right up. 'Don't you say one word to him, Polly,' the General said. I didn't, though it was very hard. One night about the middle of the meeting we heard him praying in a low voice like in his room. It was right over our bed. The General and I kneeled down together on the spot, I tell you! About day—little before—some one came into our room. 'Who's that?' I said, wide awake, for I sleep like a lynx—one eye and both ears open. 'Don't be afraid, it's only me, Ma,' he said; 'I couldn't wait till day!' Such a hugging and kissing and thanking God I don't suppose you ever heard! It wasn't three months after that he came to die. 'Ready to go any hour now, Ma,' he said from the start. 'God bless that Mr. Wall!' he said." And John listened with interest as the old lady told the long story of the dying hours of her only child.

"But the reason I could not come that time," said John at last, "was because Mr. Ramsey was so anxious to go. We had it all arranged that I was to ride in the buggy. But Mr. Ramsey plead to come, and Mr. Wall said he could not do without his presence and his prayers. And so I staid—willingly."

The fact is, it was Laura Wall, not John, who was to have accompanied upon this trip the young minister, only she had declined to do so, when it was proposed, with a vehemence amazing in one so habitually quiet and gentle. The truth is, Laura Wall had, some months before this, thrown up her hands with an "Oh, Mr. Merkes!" of actual

horror when that gentleman had one day asked her, on a visit to her father's in Hoppleton, to marry him. And, when urged by Mr. Merkes to "think over the matter, at least," her only reply had been, "Think of it! No, sir! not for an instant!" in tones sharper even than when she detected an invading calf in the act of devouring her choicest hydrangea. Of course Mr. Merkes was effectually roused towards *her*. He had hoped that she was unlike, superior to the perverse world about him. When, after long absence, he revisited the house his whole manner towards her was, "I am aware, Miss, you heartily desire an opportunity of undoing your dreadful mistake! I thank you, Miss, never!"

Part of Mr. Merkes's woe was that she had instantly made known his offer and her rejection thereof to every body. He saw that in the very manner of the clerk, in Hoppleton, of whom he bought a saddle-blanket, and was charged too much for it at that, a week after. Even Uncle Simeon, holding his horse when he visited next at General Likens's, old and infirm as he was, smiled when he took the bridle in a way which convinced Mr. Merkes that all the negroes, even, throughout the neighborhood had got hold of the story. He read his discomfiture in the titter of every girl at Sunday-school, even in the corners of the eyes and mouths of his soberest members.

Of course Laura Wall had never breathed a syllable about it even to her own father or mother. "It is *too* ridiculous—I can't!" had been her thought. Even if Mr. Merkes had known of her silence it would only have aggravated his suffering. "Did not even regard an offer from *me* of sufficient importance to mention it!" he would have said to himself. But the possibility of meeting Mr. Merkes at General Likens's house was enough to keep Laura Wall away.

Mrs. General Likens is not silent all this time.

“Ah, well, child, you are here now,” said that lady, wiping her eyes with a long handkerchief from her bag, and putting it carefully back again. “I’m going to keep you here as long as I can. Only wait till after prayers to-night and I’ll read you”—and she smiled benevolently on her young guest—“some lines I wrote on James’s death. I’ve some, too—several pieces—on Mr. Wall’s preaching. You shall hear them all.”

Now John had long heard of Mrs. General Likens’s poetry. To listen to some of it was the grievous toll that every stranger through her gates had to pay, unless that stranger, more cunning than a fox, more slippery than an eel, managed to evade the infliction. During Mr. Wall’s visit it had taxed even his genial piety to the utmost. As to Mr. Merkes, the quantity he had listened to was appalling, and had gone far towards brimming the cup of his woes. For Mrs. General Likens instinctively accepted and inflexibly applied the maxim—“Drink deep or taste not the Pierian Spring!” The General heard every line his wife wrote before the ink was dry, still as a stone in his chair, or moving only to keep his pipe filled and lighted. *He* did not mind it; the lines were only a part of the sound of his wife’s tongue, distracting him no more than the clucking of the maternal hens about the house. Honestly she believed that it was as great a pleasure to others to hear as it was to her to write; believed it so heartily as to remain blind and deaf to every possible intimation—and she had received a great many—to the contrary. Some theme would strike her in the morning, and all day, while spinning, knitting, in kitchen and dairy and poultry-yard, would she be weaving the fabric of her verse, getting it by heart as she proceeded. Then, while the General snored in deep diapason in the bed at night, the precious

lines were written out on foolscap—all too short for the purpose—on the well-worn, ink-spotted little desk in the corner. In the little dark closet under the staircase were trunks of it; but as Mrs. General Likens was in a state of perpetual production, she rarely went back beyond the effusions of the last six months. Yet, had the old house got on fire, all that poetry would have been placed far beyond the devouring flames by her before she would have even thought of her stores of yarn; stronger language than that can not be used. Yes, nature had constructed Mrs. General Likens to utter herself. She never resorted to paper when there was any living ear at hand to listen. If, then, she preferred poetry, it was because she could thus lengthen out what she had to say to an extent and tenuity of which prose did not admit.

Is it inconsistent with profound reverence to say that there must be a sense of the ludicrous in the great Creator? Surely there is an intimation of the infinite geniality of His adorable nature in bringing about that Mrs. General Likens should write, yea, and should persist in reading, too, her verses to wincing auditors. If holy spirits indeed hover over this world of ours, interested spectators of all that takes place, that they should weep over its miseries is utterly inconsistent with the perfect happiness they possess; it is quite possible that they should smile at much they daily behold. If this dear soul added a little to the sorrows of her friends on earth, depend upon it she added largely to the happiness of her friends in heaven—to their genial amusement, celestial laughter!

“Look out for the poetry, John, and don’t get rude!” was the last thing Laura had said to John in parting at the buggy—said it with a laugh. She had only known of that poetry by hearsay—had she herself ever been exposed to it she never could have jested on so serious a subject.

At this moment, supper things being cleared away, General Likens and his guest are called in. The large Bible, so thoroughly used as to require dexterous handling to keep the loose, age-darkened leaves in place, is laid on the table. A chair is placed beside it. The tallow candle is carefully snuffed with the tongs and put on one side the book. The General reads a chapter, a few verses of a familiar hymn are sung, John's voice aiding to sweeten the tones of her hostess. Then a prayer, and Charles and John rise from their knees anxious for bed. Mrs. General Likens has no such idea ; the General has.

"I'll show Mr. Wall to his room," he says, taking up the candlestick. "Light another candle, Polly, and take Miss to bed too. Now *don't* talk to her any more to-night," he adds, in an imploring tone to his wife. "I know she's tired ; let her get a good night's sleep, and you can go at her fresh in the morning !"

And, with a good-night, the gentlemen disappear from the room.

"You mustn't be surprised at the General, child," says his wife, having lighted her candle from the fire. "He's amazing slow, but he's sensible. As if I would want to break your rest ! Come, child," and John follows her gladly up the narrow steps of the steep staircase into a small, neat room. "James's room," says her hostess, in explanation. "He's in a better mansion now, and we'll all soon follow. I've got that poetry here in my bag ; took it out of the desk just before prayers, and put it there so as not to forget. You just begin to take off your things, and I'll read it to you while you unhook."

And Mrs. General Likens placed the candle—a whole one—on the table, with its white cotton cover fringed with cotton lace, and drawing up a chair beside it, adjusted her spectacles, and proceeded to untie the yarn wound about

a roll of foolscap. "You would like to hear it, child, wouldn't you?" she asked, in a way that took an affirmative as a matter of course. Now John did *not* wish to hear a line, and it was not in her nature to equivocate. There was one alternative before her.

"But you promised to tell me about my mother, you know, Mrs. Likens. For years I've wanted to see you and have you talk to me about her. We can't stay with you long, and I'm afraid I won't hear at last," said her young guest, slowly undressing.

"Well, the General told me not to talk to you—Mrs. *General* Likens, they call me, child; but the poetry can wait till I've done. You see it was this way," said the old lady, throwing her spectacles up from her nose on her head, adjusting her cap-border, and settling herself in her chair for a good talk. "It must have been some fifteen or sixteen years ago. We lived in old Virginia then. We had a home among the mountains—a better place than this it was. Our house was right on the stage-road. We hated it dreadful; passengers would walk up the mountain to ease the stage. The road was terrible steep; and they would always stop in for a drink of water. I didn't mind that, for it gave me a chance to have a good deal of agreeable talk when they came to the front porch for the gourd, only they always left the front gate open, and the hogs would get in constant. There was the garden, too, alongside the road. The stage passed twice a week; and twice every week, Mondays and Wednesdays it was, in fruit time, the garden was sure to be full of passengers getting strawberries, raspberries, apples, quinces, nectarines, peaches, green-gages—whatever it was. We kept a dog—Tige we called him; but he bit a passenger one day climbing up a pear-tree, and the General had the boys give him away. They broke the palings, too. Ah, well, child, I'll

come to it—needn't tell me. Dear me, what a white skin you have got—just like your mother. Well, one day—let me see—yes, it *was* in the summer, because I was sitting out on the front porch knitting, I heard the stage coming up the mountain, when a gentleman opened the front gate; didn't stop to shut it behind him, but came up the walk as fast! He was all pale and panting and out of breath. He lifted his hat as he come near—I saw at once he was a gentleman—and said, 'This is Mrs. General Likens, I believe? I come to beg, Madam, that you will take my wife—she is in the stage behind—and myself in for a day or two.' 'It isn't our custom to take in strangers,' I said. 'But, Madam, my wife is ill—really ill,' he said. 'Oh, if that's the case,' said I, 'certainly, certainly.' By this time the stage was at the gate. Just as soon as he opened the stage-door to help her out I saw it all at once, and hurried down. I tell you, child, she was the sweetest young creature, I do believe, I ever saw in my life. She looked up at me so helpless like, just as if I was her own mother; and I had her in the house, in the best room, her things all off, and her safe in bed in no time. I tell you, it was high time she was out of that stage, jolting about over the mountains. 'You foolish young thing,' I said; and then she told me how Mr. Easton, her husband, had married her somewhere—about Richmond, wasn't it? and then had to be absent several months out West hunting a home—a merchant, wasn't he? He had found a place, made all his plans to move out, was in a hurry to carry his wife home. 'I hated to tell him, you know, Madam,' she said; and then she began to cry. 'Oh, these men!' I said. 'Bless their souls, but they are mighty stupid about some things!' However, I cheered her up; said how glad I was it was our house she happened in at; and then I told her some of *my* troubles. Sit down on the bed, child," continued

Mrs. General Likens to her young guest ; “ but you needn’t have brought that night-gown with you ; I’ve got a plenty, I hope. I’ll show you some I worked when I was to be married to the General ; they ain’t even frayed yet—real linen. Well, I must get along, or we won’t get to the poetry to-night. Same week your father had a little daughter. Yes, it was under my roof you were born, child—and I’m glad to see you under it again. Where was that father of yours raised, child ? ”

“ In Virginia, Mrs. Li—Mrs. General Likens. My mother was too,” said John, venturing to prop herself up a little against the head-board of the old-fashioned bedstead with one of the large ruffled pillows.

“ Oh yes ; I know about your mother well enough. Any body could see that. She was as soft and plump and sweet and rosy as a June peach. I declare she was the smilingest, sweetest little wife I ever did see ! I don’t want to wound your feelings, but I declare I thought your father was a Yankee. He was a tall, handsome, mighty neatly dressed man. He was a pious man, too ; for in the six weeks he was with us he led in prayer at family worship often. But he was such a straight-forward, straight-spoken sort of a man, so prompt, so decided like. The idea of carrying his young wife right straight off to his new home the instant it was ready, stopping for nothing ! ”

And while the old lady pauses a moment to snuff the candle with her long finger and thumb, previously dampened for the purpose at her lips, it may be added that Mr. Easton was a sort of New England man, only born at the South—clear-headed, energetic. Of a singularly practical character, he prided himself on looking neither upon the dark side nor the bright side of things only, but upon every thing exactly as it was, apart from its lights and shadows. As to his wife, it was her childlike ways, her sunny

sweetness, and a certain low music in her voice, which had won her husband's heart. The youngest of her father's family, she was from birth the pet and darling. Hers was an old-fashioned, pious ancestry—and there is something even of piety bequeathed in blood and nurture, giving additional purity and glow to a person such as Rubens loved to paint, so fond and dimpled. It was because of the contrast to himself that her husband loved her.

“And so you are *his* daughter and *her* daughter!” said the old lady, taking a good look at John in the brightened shining of the candle. “Yes, child, you look like your mother, certain. Never mind, I ain't going to flatter you—flattery is bad for young girls. People flattered me too much when I was young. You look like your father, too—something about the nose, the mouth, the eye—don't know where. You only have the hard sense of your Pa, child, and the sweetness of your Ma, and you'll be nigh perfect, I reckon. But what became of your Pa and Ma when they went West? I wanted to ask Mr. Wall when he was here, but he was so busy preaching.”

“My father was a merchant in the same town six years. I was their first and only child, and they spoiled me, I'm afraid. My mother seemed to love my father and myself even more, I believe, than mothers generally do. I'll show you her miniature some day,” said John, now wide awake and sitting up in a chair. “At last she sickened slowly and died. Oh, she was so beautiful, Mrs. Likens—Mrs. General Likens; such glad eyes, and glowing cheeks, and coral lips, and winning ways to the last; every body almost idolized her. I've been told so often. When she was dying you know the strange request she made, as she left no boy, that I might be called ‘John,’ after her husband she loved so well. It was only a sick fancy, perhaps, but my dear father respected it. Hardly three years after and he was gone too.”

“Broke all to pieces, wasn’t he?” asked the old lady.

“He was rich when my mother died,” said John, softly, “but after that he seemed to care almost nothing for his affairs. His partner defrauded him in some way, and he was ruined.”

“And how was it Mr. Wall raised you?” asked her hostess, more and more deeply interested in the young girl, whose striking loveliness, as she sat with dishevelled hair in her night-dress, was heightened by their theme.

“My father was the wealthiest member, the most active member, in Mr. Wall’s church when he lived. I do not know how it was, but for years before my mother’s death I had become a kind of pet in Mr. Wall’s family—we lived near together; in fact, every body seemed to pet me, then, and ever since,” she added with a smile. “I don’t know why it is.”

“Ah, well, we can guess,” said Mrs. General Likens, with a motherly nod of her head.

“After Ma’s death,” continued John, with a blush, “I almost lived at Mr. Wall’s. There was no one at home but the servants—that is, all day when Pa was at the store. When he went to the North to buy goods he always left me there, they begged for me so. During all his sickness it was there I remained. After my father’s death they all seemed to love me more than ever. I believe I have an aunt somewhere who wrote for me, but Mr. Wall did not like the letter, or something of the kind. While he was waiting for some providence to decide the matter it decided itself, and that is all. When Mr. Wall moved to Hoppleton I came too with the family.”

“I suppose you know it, child, but Mr. Wall thinks the world of you. ‘I’ve seen a great many children in my day, ma’am,’ he said to me when he was here, and I was askin’ after you, ‘but I never saw such a thoroughly sweet

and perfectly sensible girl in all my life.' Yes, I know I oughtn't to have told you *that*. Perhaps he's all mistaken; he's such a warm-hearted man he's almost certain to think too well of people—just as Mr. Merkes thinks too bad of them. You see, Mr. Wall thinks every body he meets is good, just like him, and Mr. Merkes thinks every body he meets is just like— No, I mustn't say that—he's our minister, and he's a most excellent man, somewhere at the bottom under every thing, I do believe. And so you keep house for them, child, do you?" asked the old lady.

"No, Madam. Why who could have told you that?" asked John, with a start of surprise.

"Same man," replied the old lady, with a smile. "Let's see. 'She's a treasure, ma'am,' he said. 'Mrs. Wall's an invalid; Laura devotes herself to flowers, visiting the sick, helping at weddings; and John keeps house, keeps the keys of the smoke-house, pantry, cellar;' I think he said corn-crib, but ain't certain. 'She's a darling little old lady,' he said; 'an' her name, John, fits her like a cap.' Sing'lar, wasn't it? Are you a professor, child?" asked the old lady, rather suddenly, in conclusion.

"A member of the church?" asked her companion, after a little hesitation.

"Of course, child, yes, a professor of religion."

"Yes, Madam," replied John.

"Glad to hear it," said the old lady, sincerely pleased. "I was sure of it. It isn't late, I reckon. We haven't talked much, for the General said we'd better not; can't you tell me some of your experience?"

"I have not had any, ma'am," said John, after a moment's hesitation, taking a seat again, by the instinct of a wearied nature, on the bed.

"No experience!" exclaimed her companion, in tones of unmingled wonder.

"None worth telling you," exclaimed John.

"Yes, but I want to know when you were converted," said the old lady; "how the light first broke; how long you were mourning for sin before; something of your doubts and fears since then. You needn't say much, for we must come to the poetry. I know you are anxious to hear it."

"My religious experience is very little," said John, desirous of making some return for the deep interest of her new friend. "I was trained from my birth, you know, by pious parents. I can not remember when I did not kneel morning and night by my mother's side to say my little prayers. We always had family worship, too, and I went to Sunday-school from the time I could walk, and to church too. Ever since I have lived in Mr. Wall's family it has been the same."

"But didn't you never experience a change of heart, child? You know the Saviour said, 'Ye must be born again,'" said the old lady, with grave apprehension.

"Yes, ma'am," John makes reply, with hesitation, "I hope I have had such a change; but I don't know when it took place. I never think about that."

"Yes, child, but what proof do you have?" Mrs. General Likens asks, with anxiety.

"I try to love the Bible and the Sabbath," her companion replies, with lowered eyes and voice. "I think I do love to pray; and I know I love the Saviour, and I try to serve Him as well as I can every day," John adds, after quite a pause.

"But don't you have any exercises of mind—any wrastlin' with the devil? All his waves an' his billows don't they sometimes roll over you? You mustn't be offended, but you take things like Brown Bob Long out here. I'm not going to say Bob ain't a real disciple; but he takes

things so even like—so quiet and simple. Any way, I've powerful exercises!—up in the garret, down in the cellar! But writing my feelin's out in my poetry is some relief too: only relief except prayer. Ah! child," added the old lady, drawing in a very long breath and slowly shaking her head, "you are only a babe in Christ yet; you haven't had any experiences. You mayn't believe it, but I've got a large blank-book, which the General bought to keep his accounts in, full from one end to the other of verses I've wrote in some of my frames of mind. If I live I'll read it all to you!"

By this time the young traveller was lying entirely down upon the bed, almost asleep in spite of herself.

"That's right, child," said the old lady. "Only get under the cover; you'll take cold. We mustn't talk any more to-night. I'll sit here and read you a few pieces while you rest yourself."

So saying, the favored of the Muses unrolled her long bundle, carefully selected a sheet, snuffed the candle afresh, drew her glasses down on her eyes, took them off and wiped them carefully, replaced them, and, with a preparatory clearing of the throat, was just about to begin. At this instant there was a voice from below, of entreaty rather than command:

"Polly! old woman! *do* come down! you'll kill that poor child!"

"In a moment, General—you go to sleep!" was the shrill reply.

Whistle a lioness from its tender prey—a young fawn lying passive under its paw? Not exactly. And the poetess remorselessly read on. She was too deeply interested in her lines to glance, even, at her companion. Finished at last.

"Stop!" she said, eagerly, when the last line of the first

piece was read. "Don't express any opinion, child, till you've heard this next piece. It's better than the other, I do believe." And she dashed into it, rejoicing in so attentive a listener. When she had finished the candle-wick towered aloft like a column among the ruins of Greece.

"Well, child, what do you think of that?" she asked, as she slowly snuffed the wick. "You've listened first-rate. But don't flatter me—I don't like it. When people do, I'm always afraid they ain't sincere."

A slow, soft breathing was the only reply.

"Asleep! sound asleep, as I live!" exclaimed Mrs. General Likens, standing over the bed, and with some disappointment in her face and tones.

Yes, and from the moment she began, without the least intention on the part of the sleeper, sound asleep, her fair cheek pillowed on one open palm. As the old lady looked upon her the shade of displeasure passed from her brow.

"'Tis astonishing," she said to herself, "what music there is in them lines! It must be in the even rhymes followin' each other so pat. And she was tired too. Never mind, dear; I'll try and read them all over again to you soon's I can."

And with a soft, motherly kiss upon the cheek of the sleeper, a careful tucking in of the starry quilt at the sides, shading her wasted candle with her hand, Mrs. General Likens descended the steps with stealthy tread. As she carefully crept under the cover to the side of her sleeping lord he woke up enough to growl: "Oh, Polly, if you only *could* keep from talking so much what a blessing 'twould be!" and was snoring again in a moment after.

CHAPTER VII.

A Sunday at General Likens's.

“**D**ID you ever notice, Mr. Wall, that Sunday is almost sure to be the brightest, calmest, most delightful day of all the week, like this one, for instance?”

It is John that speaks, meeting Charles Wall on the front porch next morning. A sound sleep has restored her completely from the fatigues of her journey and of Mrs. General Likens.

“The best part of the calm and brightness is in your own bosom, John,” he replies. “I used to wish God had ordered it so that the bees and ants and all living things would rest on Sabbath. What a proof that would be of the law of Heaven about the Sabbath! I do believe Nature does keep Sabbath—a little, at least. See how silently the leaves of that live-oak are stirring. And the bees on that range of hives by the palings are not flying about—dressing their wings, don’t you see them? as if for church. The Guinea-fowls must make their hideous noise, I suppose; they can’t stop to save their lives; but you can barely hear them—gone off far from the house for the purpose.”

But now they are called in to prayers, and after that they go in to breakfast. The same bright repose upon every thing within the house, too. The General is shaved and dressed in his best, and sits at the head of his table pleasant but silent. Mrs. General Likens wears a stiff and snowy cap, and the calm sleeps almost unbroken even upon

her lips. The very girl waiting at table has an unusual whiteness of teeth and of apron and sobriety of manner, as she hands the coffee and butter and honey and biscuit.

After breakfast the young minister strolls off into the forest near by to look over his sermon before preaching, and is warned by the General not to be gone over an hour, as in that time they must "start for meetin' ;" John reads by the fire, with the General absorbed in the large Bible in his arm-chair on the other side thereof; while his wife is all over the house, up stairs and down, settling things for her absence at church.

"Time to start," the General says at last, looking at the old clock in the corner; and in a few moments they are off, Charles in his buggy with John, the General following in his Jersey wagon. "You go on," the General had said to Charles, waving him on with his whip and an air of resignation, as he sat in the front seat of his wagon, his wife on the seat behind him, her head out screaming different charges for the twentieth time to Moll, and Pete, and Ike, and Isham. "I'll catch up after a while," the General had added, with an air of cheerful melancholy. He had not been the husband of his wife thirty years not to know all her ways by this time.

Charles drives slowly along, utterly ignorant of the right road. But the General catches up with him, and asks, speedily, for his wife had "clean forgotten it," "Mr. Wall, won't you have a bite of something before you go into the pulpit?" Mr. Wall declines with thanks and surprise. Mrs. General Likens reaches forward her long arm from the back seat of their wagon, lays her hand on the reins in the General's hand as he is driving past, to add,

"You'd better, now! We've plenty in the basket here. Why, when Mr. Merkes first settled among us he boarded at our house, and we always had a biscuit for him to put

in his pocket, so's he might nibble a little just before he took his text. His stomach, you know, was ruined at the Seminary preparing for the ministry. Necessary, I suppose. Preachers oughter be thoroughly furnished, I know. Biscuit? Never was a Sunday we didn't carry a little pot of coffee to the church for him. Took it right off the fire as we left the house. I carried it careful in my lap here. More'n once the General he hit the wheel against the stump going and splashed my things drefful! Carried it into church wrapped in a newspaper, you see; but, bless you, the people all knew!"

But here the General gives his near horse a cut with his whip, and the wagon passes them. Mrs. General Likens expostulating. The young minister makes desperate effort to go on with his sermon, and to listen at the same time to a plan John is detailing to endow, when she gets rich, a livery-stable in connection with every seminary for ministers.

"A livery-stable!"

"Yes; but listen to my plan. Suppose there are two hundred students. Well, I would buy as many horses as I possibly could, say a hundred. Then I would build a stable for them. Then I would make it a law that every student should take at least one really long, good ride every day—make him promise to do so when he entered. You see, half of them could ride in the morning, the other half in the afternoon."

"Yes, and every Saturday morning," said Charles, laughing, "you would have the professors examine the delinquents as they do about failure in attending chapel: 'Mr. A. did not ride on Wednesday morning—the reason of this, Mr. A., if you please.'"

"Yes; and 'Mr. A., you will ride twice a day next week, to make up,' I would have him say," continued John, with her face perfectly sober.

“What an idea!” interrupted Charles, laughing, and giving his horse an unnecessary cut with the whip. “The notion of half the Seminarians, ‘long and lank and lean,’ trotting away every morning after chapel like a regiment—squadron I believe it is—of cavalry! What a queer crowd they would make! In the afternoon, too, instead of the long stream of black coats walking two and two down the sidewalks arguing away, the whole crowd of them on horses, tearing along the road, kicking up a dust, laughing and cutting away at each other’s horses! But how about the professors?”

“I’d have them ride too, on special horses, to set an example to the students as well as for their own health. Yes, out from their close libraries and large arm-chairs and books and pens once, at least, every day in the pure air, riding out, looking at the beautiful world, seeing people enjoying themselves. I’d have the nicest buggies for them as they got old—but out every single day except Sunday if it wasn’t actually storming. You know Christ and all his disciples lived out of doors; something so fresh and strong in them, natural and beautiful!”

Her companion meditates over it:

“There was John Knox—yes he *was* a huge, large fisted hero. Poor, trembling, wicked, beautiful Mary! Martin Luther, too—a yard across the chest, muscular as a buffalo. Wesley, too—not stout, but wiry and tough, and with a body made of steel springs. Chalmers—what a big, burly man he was! Dr. Mason, too, the great preacher, was huge and strong. Jonathan Edwards—a perfect gladiator in sinews and bones! Let me see: Oliver Cromwell? yes. Baxter? yes. Howe? Owen? Whitefield? I declare I never thought of it before; all the great Christians were physically strong men. Stop; no. ‘His bodily presence is weak,’ was said of Paul.”

“But he had special inspiration,” suggested John, clinging to her notion.

“Yes ; but there was Calvin—pale, weak—”

“Was he not a little gloomy, a little bitter in controversy ?” asked his companion timidly.

“Mustn’t say that,” replied Charles, still thinking it over until he woke with a start to find himself at the church.

As he reins in his horse behind the General’s wagon and helps John to alight, he sees with dismay how many horses are tied under the trees around, how many duplicates of the General’s wagon stand about the church in every direction. There is a formidable group of farmers lounging at the door. Ample accommodation there is, for an arbor of boughs, long since dead and dry, extends fifty feet from the door, under which are arranged seats made of hewn logs supported on stout legs, and so disposed that an aisle extends from the door with the seats on either side. The plan is for the preacher to stand in the door and divide his discourse as impartially as possible between the ladies within the building and the still larger congregation without. The General wishes to introduce the young preacher to every man on the ground. “No, no, General Likens,” says Charles to him in a low tone, and the young minister sinks twenty-five degrees in the General’s estimation. “Not till after he has preached,” whispers John the next instant into the General’s other ear ; “he thinks it will distract his mind from his preaching ;” and the General nods approvingly.

Charles passes the gauntlet of curious eyes down the aisle of the arbor, and so into the little church, while Mrs. General Likens introduces her young friend to every lady and half the gentlemen on the ground. She takes a good deal of pride in it, too, for John is very attractive this morning, as any one can easily perceive from the evident

admiration of all on the ground, especially the gentlemen. Mrs. General Likens finally settles, with John beside her, on a seat under the arbor near the church door.

Inside of the building, Charles finds a chair near the pulpit. Mr. Merkes has not yet arrived, so he removes the tin bucket of water from the chair to a bench and sits in it, finding, after a while, his seat rather damp than otherwise, a fact of which a tittering girl or two near by seem informed also. He glances around stealthily, far less at his ease than he would have been if seated in the pulpit of a city church, even; conscious that every one in the room is looking at him and coming to conclusions thereupon, and he has a general apprehension that said conclusions are somewhat unfavorable.

But Mr. Merkes enters now, tall, thin, cold, his children following timidly. Mr. Merkes shakes decorous hands with his young brother, but that brother has a vague idea that he does it under a sort of protest. He is afraid from Mr. Merkes's manner that he has in some way offended him, and resolves to be specially careful. Mr. Merkes would rather that his young brother had not arrived before him; there is a sort of presumption in it. Besides, there are a great many more people on the ground than there were last Sunday, when Mr. Merkes only was to preach.

However, the hour of service is fully arrived, Mr. Wall takes his appointed place, General Likens raises a hymn, and the service begins. It is somewhat embarrassing to preach to a congregation in the house which he can see, and to another and much larger outside the house which he sees only in part. There is a row, likewise, of black faces along the cracks of the logs, for the structure is a log-cabin. As the minister warms to his sermon there come through these cracks frequent exclamations of "Bless de Lord!" "Yes, honey, dat's so!" and the like,

which rather encouraged him than not. Before he is half through he hears Mr. Merkes hunting for the closing hymn in the hymn-book, and is terrified to think he may have exceeded his allotted time by whole hours even—he had been so interested! He can easily distinguish the voice of John in the singing which follows, as she sits beside Mrs. General Likens.

With the benediction the gentlemen in the congregation scatter away to look after their horses. The negro servants bring into the building from the carriages and wagons around an amazing quantity of baskets and tin buckets. The ladies bustle about, Mrs. General Likens never ceasing to talk from the moment the benediction was uttered, spreading clean table-cloths on the benches, and disposing thereupon saucers of pickles, plates of preserves, roasted chickens, ham, pork, sausages, bread, cake, pies, pitchers of milk, and the like. Half a dozen coffee-pots bubble upon the grate of the huge stove, and, Mr. Merkes having said a very long grace, every body begins helping every body else to something; for it is “a basket-meeting.”

“We’ll take a little walk to the spring, child,” Mrs. General Likens observes to John at last; and they pass down the arbor aisle among gentlemen and ladies with their dinners in their hands, and children eating cake, and only cake, managing to grease, in doing so, the dress of every person in the disbanded congregation. John catches, as she passes him, the full situation of the late speaker, holding a pone of corn bread in one hand, the half of a roasted chicken in the other, his appetite satisfied, and desperate as to what is to be done with these remainders thereof, in a whirl of being introduced to every body all the time. John follows her friend, a ludicrous idea of a hen with one chicken flashing for an instant over her mind.

There is a long row of ladies seated upon a fallen tree

near the spring, all of them talking, and not a few of them, young and old, likewise engaged in "dipping"—not water from the clear spring, but in that very different operation known throughout the South-west as "dipping snuff," to which, by the way, may in a great measure be ascribed the exceeding sallowness of their complexions. Shall I, for the benefit of the dwellers in other regions, describe this operation? No; only so far as to say that the fair "dipper" holds in her lap a bottle containing the most pungent Scotch snuff, and in her mouth a short stick of soft wood, the end of which is chewed into a sort of brush. This is ever and anon taken out, thrust into the bottle, and returned to the mouth loaded, as a bee's leg is with pollen, with the yellow powder. It is a matter of politeness to pass around the snuff-bottle, just as their husbands and brothers pass around the whisky-flask. All the rest is left to the reader's imagination.

It was half an hour before the ladies, having thus privately solaced themselves, returned to the place of worship. When they had got fairly seated a sounding version of

"When I can read my title clear"

gathered in the congregation from every quarter, each individual joining in the hymn as he got near enough to the spot. A little hurry on the outskirts on the part of the negroes, finishing their dinners, packing up the cloths, plates, knives and forks as they did so, a driving off of the dogs, picking up the remains of the dinner about the church, and service was resumed. Far more in the mood for preaching, as ministers always are at their second sermon on the same day.

But this service, too, is over. In a quiet way John manages to secure a seat with Mrs. General Likens on their return, leaving the General to accompany the young minis-

ter in his buggy when they shall have finished shaking hands with the dispersing congregation. And John evidently has something to say, but is perplexed to accomplish it, not listening very attentively to her companion, who is talking steadily along as usual.

“We leave in the morning, you know,” John at last gets chance to say, “and there is a little matter that I would be so glad if you can arrange it for me. I know you are accustomed to write—”

“Certainly, child, certainly,” interrupted Mrs. General Likens, greatly pleased. “I *do* write, I may say constant. Only tell me the subject; about your dear Ma, or your Pa, about this meetin’ to-day—he’s a real good preacher, but he isn’t his uncle yet, I tell you—about your last birthday, or the death of any body’s baby you know of; any thing in the world you think of, child, it doesn’t matter what! You only tell me how many pages of foolscap you’d like it to be; whether you’d rather it should be rhymes, or in blank-verse, or in something, say, between the two. I can do it for you to-morrow, perhaps this very night, if it’s suitable to the Sabbath. I write in rhymes easy enough; but blank-verse! I can write as fast as I can keep ink on the pen and new paper before me; only let me know—”

“But, Mrs. General Likens,” interrupted her companion, “I don’t mean *that*; at least I don’t mean *that now*. You remember you asked me, and I told you, how it was I have lived in Mr. Wall’s family till now. I have long wanted to teach school. You know Mr. Wall is by no means rich; besides, there are reasons just now”—she blushed as she spoke. “I have long ago determined to do something for myself. I don’t know any thing I can do except teach. I thought perhaps I might get a school in this neighborhood somewhere, and if you would let me board in your

house—I only wanted you to be so good as to ask the General, and find out and write to me as soon as you can.” And John had at last got through with a matter which had filled her thoughts for weeks—the declaring her intention, at least—and it all seemed much easier to her now that she had spoken it out.

“I was afraid to speak to Mr. Merkes about it,” continued John, while Mrs. General Likens hesitated—almost the first time in her life. “He was at Mr. Wall’s quite often too; but you know how Mr. Merkes talks; I was afraid he would discourage me too much, even before I began to teach.”

“You poor child!” said Mrs. General Likens, reining in her horses for a good talk. “Pshaw! I forgot they are behind us, and will be hurrying us on. You dear child!” she continued, whipping the horses up—and then she was silent again. “Does Mr. Wall—the uncle I mean—does *he* know any thing about it?” she asked at length, sorely troubled.

“No, Madam, not yet,” said John; “I wanted to make all my plans first.”

“Oh, well, pshaw, that settles it!” said her companion, cheerfully. “Mr. Wall knows, and he would never let you do any thing of the sort.”

“I intend to teach,” said John, in a low, firm voice, so that her companion looked at her with surprise. “Besides,” she added in a lighter tone a moment afterwards, “I know that Mr. Wall will see—will understand—will approve my course. I’m sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. General Likens. Never mind! I’ll try and find some other neighborhood. I spoke now because this was my first opportunity.”

“You don’t understand me at all, child,” said her companion, with a sweetness and gentleness of manner new to

her. "I didn't think Mr. Wall would let you come, because he told me over and over again when he was here—I was telling you some of it—how he loved you, how they could not get along without you. But you may have good reasons, child; there must be something in that sing'lar paleness of yours about the lips—makes you look like your father. Why I didn't speak, too, was you don't know any thing about teaching!"

"I do not know as much as I ought, but I've learned more, perhaps, than you think for one of my age. Besides, I could study in advance of my scholars. I could try, at least—"

"Oh, I don't mean that, child!" interrupted her friend, with almost sharpness in her tones. "You know fifty times as much as you'll ever get any of the scholars out here up to learning: fifty times? a thousand times as much! What I mean is, you know nothing at all of the worry and bother of teaching. The sweetest preserves is sure to sour worst, and if teaching six months don't sour you! Jest try it. Why, child, your face 'll get long, and your eyes all hollow, and you'll fall away in flesh, and get scrimpsy in your dressing; your voice 'll get cracked with scolding, an' your hands hard with slapping. Why, you poor child!" said Mrs. General Likens, surveying her mournfully, and reaching the climax of her worst anticipations, "sweet as you are to-day, school-teachin' 'll make an old maid of you as sure as you sit here!"

"You are almost as bad as Mr. Merkes," said John, manfully, but with a strong disposition to cry.

"No, child; Mr. Merkes he imagines things, but I am tellin' you only the hard facts," was the consoling reply. "Not that I ain't proud to have you stay with us," said the old lady, taking a new view of the case from that quarter, and brightening up. "The General and I'll be

more than delighted to have you. Yes," added the old lady, her mind among the trunks under the staircase, with glee at the thought; "we'll be glad if *any thing* keeps you with us, even if it's a school. Write? Yes, I'll write in a hurry. What's the use seeing about the school part of it? That's all nonsense. But you never mind. I'll talk to the General as soon as we get into bed this very night. If he isn't the leadin' man in this neighborhood—Likens neighborhood—I'd be thankful to know who is. School? Yes. The General thinks the world of you already, though he don't say as much as he might. He don't talk much, poor man! though he can act powerful. But here we are at the gate! Jump out, child!"

CHAPTER VIII.

In which we return to Patriarchal Times.

“NOW then, supper, Polly, and just as soon as you please: sun’s getting mighty low,” said the General, as the whole party entered the front piazza, and with more of the tone of the master than Charles or John could have imagined him ever to assume. The request to his wife was, however, not in the least needed by her. “Make haste, water! stir yourself, pour ahead!” a miller might as reasonably have said to the foaming tide rushing through the mill sluice at his wheel. A good hundred yards before arriving at her front gate Mrs. General Likens had her bonnet-strings untied; she took it off her head as she got out of the buggy; she unfastened the old-fashioned black breastpin wherewith her worsted shawl was secured about her throat, and had her bonnet securely wrapped up and away, till next Sabbath, in it before she reached the piazza; and as her foot crossed the threshold of the house every negro on the place was wide awake from the afternoon doze or chat, ready for the closing duties of the Sabbath.

In twenty minutes after their arrival the family sat down to supper. In thirty minutes more they were up from table. Every servant moved with glad alacrity clearing away the supper-table, setting it again as fast as the table-ware came from the renovating hands of the mistress, keeping her seat thereat, with hot water and voluminous towel and incessant speech. In little more than an hour from the time of their return supper has been eaten, the table

spread again for an early breakfast next morning, covered over with clean and ample muslin.

One hour more the servants have to eat their own suppers, to assure their swarming children that they will "catch it soon's meetin's over" if they make a disturbance of any kind therein, and to seat themselves, at the sound of the largest bell in the house, in the parlor. It is an ample room, but Charles and John find it quite full as they enter. All are standing along the benches they have brought in for the purpose as the white family enter the room. There is a general salutation, "Massa, Missis!" on the part of the servants, responded to by a "Howdy, folks?" from the General, and all are seated.

As they had ridden home from church the General had said to his young companion,

"You hardly knew what I meant when I said I'd rather you'd go somewhere else to stay all night. Fact is just this : I don't know how it is, but ministers in our denomination have, almost every one of them, one great fault—they don't mix among the people half enough. Hundreds of times ministers 've come to this neighborhood to preach. They always come to my house—that, of course—glad to have them ; but then they *stay* there all the time they are in the region ; go to church with me ; talk only with me between preaching on the ground ; part with me to be off for my house again the moment day's preaching is over ; stick to me like cockle-burs ; can't shake them off. Why, come to look at it, *I'm* just the man in all this neighborhood they should care to have least to do with. *I'm* an old member ; *my* flint's fixed forever. It's the outsiders, the ones that ain't professors at all, they should be most with. Take the hardest case in all this neighborhood—and there's plenty, I tell you—them Meggar boys, for instance. Such a man throws saddle on his horse Sunday morning and

rides to church, just because ain't any thing else—shootin' for beef, or the like—goin' on. Very little he hears—none at all he remembers. Suppose now, after preachin' he is introduced to the minister—and *I* do just that thing whenever I get the chance—he is sure to say, 'Can't you ride home with me and stay all night, Mister?' He don't expect him to do it, but he wants to show he's as much of a gentleman, in some things at least, as any man on the ground. Suppose the preacher says—and he's sure to do it—'Thank you, but I believe I am expected to go home with General Likens,' though I *don't* expect him; under the circumstances, don't want him home with me at all. Well, there's the first and the last of his influence over that man. Before night the man's forgot such a man's the preacher ever lived.

“Now suppose minister says instead, 'Thank you; I'll take you at your offer,' and goes with the man? The man feels flattered to have his invitation accepted. Whatever he may be—cursing among his horses or his negroes, or at a shooting-match or on a hunt—all the time that minister's with him he's a perfect gentleman! What a chance the minister has to do that man good, riding home with him through the woods! At his house, too, what an opportunity at the man's wife and children! At table the man says, 'Ask blessing, if you please,' and God's blessing is asked in that house for the first time. Wife remembers something, and there's a tear in the corner of her eye as she pours out the coffee. Children stare and wonder. After supper the man says, or if he don't the wife does, or if she don't then the minister himself can say, 'Suppose we have a verse or two and a prayer before we lie down?' There isn't a man in all this section would say no. What a chance to say something in explaining the passage he reads, then the hymn he sings, and the prayer he can put

up! Worship, too, next morning before he leaves. The man'll propose it himself. Look at it. That man is flattered by the visit, will always have a liking for that minister, will go himself and take all his family to hear him preach next time, and listen then really to what he preaches. The children question their Pa and Ma about the thing for months after. How much better spending the night that way than going home with *me*, or any other professor, to talk over doctrines we've been over a thousand times, or about the nonsense of other denominations, wondering together how they can believe such stuff as they do! Do you remember the first thing Christ did after calling Matthew?" continued the worthy General, gathering the reins and whip in one hand, and turning round upon Charles, who filled the back seat.

"Accompanied him to his house to a feast, I believe," said Charles.

"Exactly; and when the Saviour called Zaccheus down from that tree?"

"It was that Zaccheus might entertain him at his own house," replied Charles.

"And both became disciples of Jesus," said the General.

"That was the way the Master always did, if we only knew. Other denominations that don't educate their preachers till they are millions of miles off from common people, and with stomachs gone at that, are beating us all to pieces. Look at Mr. Merkes! He's too old a man to be talked to, but he's like one of these bamboo vines that's run round and round a sappling, and got set in the grain; a yoke of oxen at both ends couldn't pull it straight—only kills *him*! And, by-the-by, I want you to preach a sermon to the hands at the house to-night."

"A sermon?" exclaimed Mr. Wall, with alarm. "Really, I was not aware—I will hardly have time to prepare—"

“Never mind,” said his companion, good-humoredly. “I’ll give you a text when the time comes. I think the sermon ’ll come when you try.”

“It was this audience the General meant,” said Charles to himself as he entered the parlor filled with “the hands,” and the house-servants.

Mrs. General Likens with John occupied chairs on the other side of the General, who sat in the door with the little square work-table of his wife before him, having thereon a candle, a hymn-book, and the large old Bible, Charles near by. The General looked at the clock. He wore an aspect of quiet dignity which his visitors had never before observed. Perfect silence reigned in the room, every eye fastened upon him. To a well-known tune he began :

“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,—”

and before the first word was well out of his mouth the whole congregation had joined in.

There were a dozen stout men, black as sable itself, about the same number of women of all shades of color, from deepest jet up to light mulatto, a dozen or more children of all ages standing by their parents or sitting in their laps. Side by side—in the front of all, seated not on benches but in hide-bottom arm-chairs—were an aged couple, evidently husband and wife, the woman sitting erect as a column, but her gray-haired companion leaning upon a horn-headed staff—Simeon and Anna. Not one there who does not join in the singing with the whole soul, certainly with the entire voice, rich, deep, and in excellent time; for there is something of the tropical ripeness of his own clime in the very lungs of the negro. The General has a plain, strong voice of his own, but it can be heard only in the first syllable of each new verse. At the end of it all wait respectfully for “old Massa” to start the next; but

with the second syllable all join in unanimously, entirely drowning the voice of the General. There are a good many verses to the hymn, but they are all sung to the last line with a keen enjoyment which can not afford to spare the smallest fragment. In fact, after the last verse has been sung the General starts it again, and all instantly unite with hearty approval, fuller zest, and stronger melody, if possible, than before.

• Then there is a complete hush for a minute.

“Uncle Simeon will lead us in prayer,” says the General, and the entire congregation are upon their knees. They must wait, however, a little, for Uncle Simeon is old, very old, and it takes him some time, even with his wife’s assistance, to get upon his knees. Then he begins in a low, trembling voice. The visitors regret that he was called upon—evidently he is too decrepit. It is only Uncle Simeon’s body they know as yet. Gradually his voice becomes clearer and firmer. He is actually speaking to God on the mercy-seat. All his religion has been drawn direct from the Bible, and it brims his heart—so his prayer is only his heart uttering itself in Scripture language. He prays at length for “Massa and Missis.” Well for them they had fallen into no grievous sins, they would certainly have been part of Uncle Simeon’s confession of sin, somewhat specific in the case of himself and others present. From the mere habit of many years, and with the forgetfulness of age, he next prays for “Mass’ James, dere only chile;” but he corrects himself the next instant, “Forgive poor old servant, Lord; thousand thanks to dy name, Mass’ James dun prayed into glory ’ready!” Nor does he forget “Young Miss, now de stranger in dese gates dis Sabber-day. Don’t know whether she is dy chile, Lord; dou knowest! Make her like Deb’ra, Lord, to fight against dy enemies; like Marthy, to wait on thee constant; like Mary, to sit on de ground at dy feet all her

days!" And the heart of the young girl breathes a fervent Amen! "Young Massa here now, de Timothy now in dy presence, Lord," is not omitted from Uncle Simeon's supplications. All his entreaties for him reach their climax in the petition, "Onny make him his uncle ober again an' we're satisfied!"

The aged negro closes his prayer with a reference to heaven, as if he knelt upon its very threshold, beholding the glory within. He is assisted by his wife into his chair after all the rest are seated again—and Charles has learned more on the subject of prayer than from all the many treatises thereupon he has ever read.

Half of "How tedious and tasteless the hours" is next sung, and with feeling more chastened and true. Then the General opens the Bible before him and says,

"What was our subject last Sunday, folks?"

"Prodigal Son," is the prompt reply, apparently from every lip. Perhaps Uncle Simeon's full allusion to this parable in his prayer had helped them to remember.

"What is our subject this evening?"

Not so many voices reply, but those who do answer eagerly,

"Miracle of blind Bartimeus!"

"Yes," says the General, and proceeds slowly to read the same, making, as he goes, very brief explanations.

"Any questions to ask, folks?" he says. There is a silence of five minutes. The General understands and waits. Isham, the mulatto, has never failed yet to have at least one. The presence of the visitors is an impediment, but the question toiled after during all the previous week arrives at his tongue's end at last, then comes out sudden and abrupt:

"Massa, did Christ cure *all* de blind people in de land?"

"No, Isham."

"All de blind people he *saw*, I mean, Massa."

"No, Isham."

"But *why*, Massa?" Isham is the colored theologian of the place. "Christ so kind, you know."

"Tell him, Uncle Simeon," says the General, quietly.

"How did de Lord come to cure Bartimeus, boy?" asks Uncle Simeon, not raising his head from his horn-headed staff, nor looking around.

"Bartimeus heard 'twas Christ going by, an' *asked* him to do it," says Isham.

"Dat all?" asks Uncle Simeon.

"He asks him *loud*," says Isham, after a pause. "He asks him spite of people trying to make him hush," he continues after another silence. "He jest keeps on crying out, begging Jesus to do it; won't stop begging till Jesus *does* do it," adds Isham after still further reflections.

"Member now any body, Isham, dat come to de Saviour begging him dat way and *wasn't* cured?"

Isham meditates. "None's I now 'members," he says at length.

"No," says Uncle Simeon, quietly. "No poor creeter ever come to Jesus, den, asking help, asking in real earnest, no poor creeter ebber come to Jesus dat way den or ebber sence—bless de Lord!—but Jesus always hear an' grant. It's onny dem dat won't come, or onny half come, dat stays blind. Nothin' more to say, Massa."

Isham subsides upon his bench, and Charles has heard an exhaustive explanation of God's sovereignty in connection with man's free agency.

A prayer from the General follows. Then the other half of the unfinished hymn.

"Mr. Wall will say a few words to you now, folks, and then pray with us," says the General.

The young minister has no need to drag his brain for

the heads of some sermon already prepared. His warmed heart has kindled his mind, and he merely repeats and endeavors to impress Uncle Simeon's explanation upon the minds of all—he makes it not a bit clearer, however. After his prayer the General says :

“We've had a Miracle to-day; then it's a Parable next Sunday. It will be the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Listen, folks,” and he reads the parable slowly and distinctly. “Think over it, all of you, all this week, and remember what you've heard to-day. Now, folks ! ‘There is’”—and all unite in the hymn—“‘a land of pure delight,’” and either they are the greatest hypocrites on earth, or they do really enjoy the singing. At its close the General only adds, “God bless you, folks !” and the meeting is over.

It is a necessity of their nature, however, that all present must shake hands with Massa and Missis and the young visitors before they can possibly leave the room. Charles sees and feels more genuine human heart in the glad eyes, and smiling teeth, and hearty exclamations, and warm grasps of the hand, than during a six months in the Seminary. Last of all Uncle Simeon and his wife leave the room, their chairs carried out after them by some of their children present. “John Anderson my Jo John,” Charles thinks, and asks and learns their names.

“Ah, yes, Simeon ! I had forgotten,” he says. “But, Anna ? it's a singular coincidence, you remember, in the Temple.”

“It only happens so,” says the General ; “but it has had a happy influence on them ever since they've been married—and that's more'n fifty years ago—twenty years before Polly and I, and more. And it's Simeon's second wife, too. We think he can not be far from a hundred.”

“With the exception of the color he reminds me of one

of the old prophets," said Mr. Wall, after they had settled again around the fire.

"Ha, now, General! don't you say one single word," interjected the wife of the same, rising to her feet. "I want to tell them about all that myself. Just a minit till I come back."

And the General smoked his pipe under this weird spell of silence, while his far more voluble half made her rounds for the night, seeing to it that the hen-house was actually locked, the smoke-house door not left ajar, no brands on the kitchen hearth, every turkey safe on its roost behind the bee-hives.

"It's gettin' late, an' you must be tired preachin', Mr. Wall; an' we are all tired hearin' preachin'. It's as exhaustin' sometimes to hear as it is to preach. But that isn't Uncle Simeon," remarks Mrs. General Likens at last, as she resumes her seat and takes the long ends of her capstrings in her ever-restless fingers, in lieu of the knitting-needles interdicted by the day. "I've been tryin' to remember the lines I wrote on that awful night we had with Uncle Simeon. If it wasn't there's a bushel or so of other poetry on top of it there in the trunk I would try an' hunt it up this minit to read to you. It begins:

"That time I never can forget,
We all upon the porch were set,
When Uncle Simeon came and stood—

stood—stood," added the poetess, meditatively; "for my life I can't remember what I rhymed to stood. You see, it's the rhyme brings the idea. Never mind; I'll find it first thing I do in the mornin', and read it to you at breakfast. Never mind! It was years before James died. How long was it, General? Yes, whole years. It *was* on the porch it happened. I make a point not to say one word in my poetry is not true. One Saturday night it

was; weather was pleasant; General sat as it were there, James he sat there, I sat here. I can't say what we were talkin' about. First thing you knew, Uncle Simeon was standin' before us like a ghost. You see he goes to bed with the sun. Thought he was asleep, an' he had been asleep sound, Anna she said; stood right, say, *there*, like a ghost. 'I see him lyin' cold an' dead,' he said. You see how he is bent; well, he was as straight as an arrow, his eyes fixed like, staring straight before him. 'Cold an' dead!' 'Cold an' dead!' he kept sayin' it. Who it was he saw he didn't say, an' that was every word he did say. But we knew well enough who he meant when James died. Didn't know any thin' more about it all next mornin' than you. Stood? stood? I can't for my soul remember what rhymed to stood."

"Time to go to bed," says the General at this juncture, rising from his seat, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and putting it carefully away in its especial niche on the mantel. "You may be almost sure, Polly, they've forgotten to put any clean towel in Mr. Wall's room," he is adding, when, like an apparition, they are suddenly aware that Uncle Simeon is standing in the open door. He has evidently just risen from his bed, for he is wrapped about with his white bed-covering, held before him together with his left hand, while his right hand, in which he always carries the staff upon which he leans, is now stretched out before him with long, pointing finger. Behind him stands his wife, half awake and pulling at his clothes with many a remonstrance. But Uncle Simeon is either deranged, or is walking in his sleep. His eyes are wider open than they have been for years—are fastened in the direction in which he points with eagerness. Perfectly erect, with white head and face illumined as from within, he stands as if regardless of all there, pointing, gazing!

“Blood an’ burnin’! Blood an’ burnin’!” He says only that, repeating it over slowly and steadily—“Blood an’ burnin’!” But it thrills those present with nameless horror; not on account of the words, but the tone and manner of the speaker. It was as if he actually saw what he spoke of before him.

For full five minutes all stand risen to their feet in wonder and dread, which they have not time to reason away. Long habit of command enables the General to speak and act first.

“Come, boy, that’ll do!” he says at last, in the sharp tones of cotton-patch and corn-field. The words seem to break the spell upon the old man; his arm falters and falls, his eyes close, he shudders and shrinks as with cold, and it requires the assistance both of master and mistress, as well as that of his wife, to get him out of the room and back to his cabin near by.

Full an hour of wondering and speculating upon the matter follows their return to the room—on the part, at least, of all but the General, who sits silent in his arm-chair, with head sunk upon his breast in grave reflection.

“That’ll do, Polly, that’ll do,” he says at last, rising. “The less we talk it over the better. High time to be in bed. All we’ve got to do is ev’ry day that comes to do our duty’s well as we can. One thing, I’d good deal rather none of us said any thing about this to-night out o’ doors. Good-night, Mr. Wall. You must be right tired. Good-night, Miss John. No you won’t, Polly. I’ll see to it you won’t write any poetry on *this*; not, at least, if *I* can help it.”

CHAPTER IX.

John and her Friend.

THERE never lived the guest of General Likens who could say that he or she ever rose in the morning, however early, and did not find Mrs. General Likens up before them. Uncle Simeon ought to know. He was an old man on the place that morning when she first arose as Mrs. General Likens. He can testify—only his evidence was not then legal—that he never rose but his mistress was awake before him; and Uncle Simeon woke early if ever man did. The General said that it was in order that she might begin talking, but he didn't mean it.

In the morning you had only to throw off the snowy sheets with the red-starred quilt on top, rise, and dress yourself, though the sun was far from up: it was no use trying to sleep. The bolster wrapped entirely around the head, so as to exclude the sound, has been tried repeatedly, but in vain, by guests hungry for more slumber. The step of Mrs. General Likens around and through and over the entire house; the voice of Mrs. General Likens coo-cheeing the poultry to their morning meal, ordering the servants in their duties; the very fact that she was so active and entirely wide-awake while you were in bed, stirred you up from under the heaviest covering, and out of the profoundest disposition to sleep. And when you issued forth, whatever was the hour, there was Mrs. General Likens to entertain you. Her neat gray dress, her snowy cap, with the frills standing up around it so stiffly, and giving such a wide-awake expression to her face; her kindly

smile, her small, quick eyes, only less speaking than her lips; the full life of the old lady to the very tips of her mitted fingers, to the very points of her slippers—all made her a picture beyond the swiftest brush to delineate to the life. If Landseer ever succeeded with an eagle on the wing, he might try it; if Rosa Bonheur ever gave perfect satisfaction in a winning horse just reaching the post, she might make the attempt.

“I have read of those wonderful ladies entertaining saloons full of company,” said John to herself that Monday morning, as she lay and listened. “I never met with any of them in their silks and diamonds; but I wonder if Mrs. General Likens is not a Madame Sévigné or a Madame Genlis in the woods—a sort of Mademoiselle Récamier in the rough, a Madame de Staël in the ore. Just imagine a splendid room, all grand with chandeliers, and paintings, and gorgeous ladies, and glittering generals; and then Mrs. General Likens, what she is by birth, only educated to it all, and dressed as richly as the best of them, animated by admiration and universal applause for every word she uttered: she would surpass the most wonderful of them all,” continued John to herself, roused fairly out of her doze and her bed by the idea.

But John managed to forget her, too, when at last she sat down, as was her wont, with her Bible—her father’s last gift. “Yes,” said she to herself, as she finished the chapter and replaced the ribbon, “here is indeed the substance of one’s experience, as Mrs. General Likens says, the grounds, and food, and strength of piety. Something exactly to suit one’s own case, to cast some entirely new and encouraging light on it, in every chapter I read.”

And she knelt softly beside her chair in prayer, animated and strengthened by and based upon the verses she has just read.

Do you believe God on his throne in heaven bends more attentively, more lovingly, over John the beloved disciple worshipping Him there, than He does over this John worshipping Him on earth? If we dared ascribe degrees to God, He has a more active care for this fair child of his, yet among the brambles of the way, than for such as have safely entered their Father's house, and are set down there in eternal peace. It was with her as the child that clambered into his arms for a blessing when He sat by the wayside in journeying to and from Jerusalem—with a natural gladness she nestled herself as in his arms, and, with her lips to his ear, whispered things she breathed to no other being—sins, sorrows, fears, requests—her whole heart. And never did she draw nearer to her Friend than now, because never before had she so needed his aid. Girls of her age must have a confidante; some girls like themselves, to whom they can talk, and with whom they can have many a delicious laugh and more delicious cry; or to whom, when separated, they can write pages upon pages, crossed and recrossed. If no such confidante is to be had, a journal is the resource—the heart is written out on its pages.

But John had neither journal nor confidante. From birth she had been trained to make Jesus her friend, companion, confidant, instead. The habit grew with her growth. When a mere child, she had hastened to her little room with the fragments of "Grandma," her dearly-beloved doll, and prayed for another, and it had been very much so ever since. Not more fully did she believe in the existence of Mr. Wall, the uncle, than she did in that of Jesus, and she loved and lived with this last Friend with an intimacy beyond comparison closer and warmer. Like a child towards her Saviour, even in fits of passion and alienation from Him, then returning to him repentant, clinging

about his neck with sobs, and confessions, and promises of amendment. Far from perfect in any respect, such faith as she had was no more a merit of hers than the beating of her heart: guilty, and she well knew it, if she had less.

“I do wonder what I *would* be without Him,” she said to herself, almost aloud, as she sat for a moment, after rising from her knees. “I can not imagine, I suppose, because it has always been so with me; a sort of feather tossed about by whatever breeze happens to blow—a straw on the current of things!”

Ah, lily, the same soft force that bends your white petals so modestly towards the earth binds the ponderous sun in its orbit; the sweet influence which holds you what you are, held Saul from being, till death and so on forever, a blasphemous and blood-stained bully and ruffian. That grasp, softer than that of a babe yet strong as Jehovah, which holds you holds General Likens, smoking his morning pipe on the front piazza, from being a mere hornless, human ox, sordid and dumb—holds his wife from being a shrew, before whom Billingsgate would have fled appalled—holds Charles Wall from being a libertine and a liar—holds Mr. Merkes from hanging himself.

But the bell rings for prayers, and after prayers breakfast.

CHAPTER X.

In which Mrs. General Likens expresses herself.

“**Y**OU must eat a good, hearty, traveller’s breakfast, Miss John, for we have a good day’s drive before us,” says Charles, setting, as every preacher should, an example of his injunctions.

“Not ex-actly!” says the General, at the head of the table.

The young lady’s eating or the journey? exclaim both visitors with their eyes.

“No journey for you to-day,” the General explains.

“Oh, thank you!” says Charles. “But we are compelled to leave. I must be at home to-night.”

“It is astonishing,” the General soliloquizes aloud, pausing with a sparerib in his hand to do it, “how ministers do talk of home. It’s always ‘Thank you, but I *must* get home!’ They live in their home like a terrapin in his shell, poke out the head half an inch, and then jerk it back again! They won’t mix with the people, won’t live out in the world. When they do go among folks it’s like a man bathing of a cold day; ‘if I must, I must!’ Souse! he goes into the water, then out again, and off in double-quick time. No wonder the people, except exactly their own church, stand off from them as far’s they do. Every time they preach only the same set of people, the old stand-bys an’ their children the year round.

“Was that the way the Saviour did, I want to know?” continued the General, almost angrily. “No, he was right

among people. Wise men from the East an' a crowd of shepherds come in to see, an' the like, from his very birth. Same all the time there at Nazareth, I'll warrant. At that wedding in Cana; talking with the woman at the well; staying with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; eatin' and drinkin' with publicans and sinners; riding into Jerusalem with a crowd around; out on that mountain teaching, the people swarming close about him by thousands like bees! Now and then he was alone by himself in the desert, or up the mountain at night, when every body was asleep, at prayer; but, as a general rule, all his time from dawn till dark he lived right in the thick of the people. And most of our ministers!—look at them! The Master says, '*Go out!* Go out quickly into the streets an' lanes of the city after the poor, maimed, halt, blind!' More than that: '*Go outside the city, into the highways an' hedges, an' compel them to come in.*' And more than that: '*Go out into all the world, and preach the gospel to ev'ry creature.*' And yet look at most of our ministers—never really contented except by the fire in their study—door shut, book in hand, pipe perhaps in mouth, dyspepsy, most like, in stomach! Of course," added the General, after a pause, "some o' their time must be spent in prayer and study—close an' hard at that—but the main part ought to be out o' doors in the very centre of the people—at least seems so to me!" And the General resumed his sparerib, while his wife sat amazed at his unusual flow of speech.

"General Likens," says John, with merry eyes, "I was telling Mr. Wall, as we came from Hoppleton, that I would do great things for Theological Seminaries when I get rich; and one thing will be to have you appointed to the Professorship of Human Nature."

"Thank you, Miss; but if they could only get the right man—it wouldn't be from among the ministers, I'm afraid,

—next to the man that expounded Scripture to them he would be the teacher most needed. The Bible first, human nature next ! I've seen a heap of ministers in my day coming fresh from the Seminary like goslings from the shell. I tell you it takes five years of good rubbing with the actual world to get their kinks and queerities out o' them. Some stay kinky all their lives !”

“And a part of this rubbing I am getting just at this moment,” says Charles, good-humoredly, wincing a little. “And I will be glad to have it,” he adds, cordially.

“‘Keep Charles as long as you please, but send back John—we can't live without her,’” added the General, reflectively, “was the last words your uncle said as I rode off. I remember it on account of that young Burleson.”

“Young Burleson ?” exclaimed Charles, looking up, while John did the exact reverse.

“Edward Burleson,” continued the General, after draining his cup of coffee and carefully buttering a third biscuit while it was being refilled.

“You see, he drove up in a buggy,” continued the General at last, “while your uncle and I was talking. Handsome fellow, bran-new buggy, splendid horse. ‘Do I understand you, Mr. Wall, that Miss John is absent ?’ he asked, looking blank as you please. ‘Yes, General,’ says your uncle to me, ‘you're the man to do it. Rub him as much as you can ; it will do him good ;’ and I rode off to catch up with you, and left them talking. You see, I had been in Hoppleton trading—do all our trading there—do it always.”

“Exactly, entirely, jest so !” said Mrs. General Likens, who had been painfully silent, smiling over the rims of her spectacles at John, whose eyes were in her plate. “Excellent match ; rich as cream, child. If he don't belong to the church, his father does. Ah, ha !” continued Mrs. Gen-

eral Likens, nodding to herself at her own information, understandingly and approvingly. "Exactly, yes!"

"And besides," continued the General, plodding along in his own path, "you remember a man sat right before you at church?—dark complected, straight as a ramrod, tall, long black hair, plain clothes?"

"And who listened so to every word I uttered?" said Charles, to whom the question was addressed. "Yes, I remember him perfectly. I do not think he stirred an inch or turned his eyes aside an instant during the sermon—and the same at the second service."

"Learned that lying behind brush waiting hours to get a shot at wild turkeys!" interjected Mrs. General Likens.

"Remember I introduced him to you just as we left," said the General. "Remember he shook hands with you! I was watching an' laughing while I was untying the horses."

"But, General," said Charles, "he really ought to be told by some one; he actually hurt my hand, he gave it such a squeeze. I felt it for twenty minutes afterwards as we rode along."

"Brown Bob Long!" ejaculated Mrs. General Likens. "I tell you he never got *my* hand in his but once—that day at the church, you remember, General. I do declare that man was the happiest human I ever saw in my life; the day he experienced religion, I mean. There was something deep, something solemn, kind of awful, in that man's joy that day. And he didn't say any thing—didn't talk at all; that astonished me most; only was so powerful happy. Brown Bob Long! I wouldn't have touched that man with a forty-foot pole up to that meetin'. 'Twas when your uncle was here, Mr. Wall; that same blessed meetin' James was converted. You see, I had heard—think 'twas Araminta Allen told me—one you saw at the spring with

that brush, child—and I looked round in meeting, and sure enough a blind man could see it in his face. Brown Bob Long! I wouldn't have taken that hand of his with the kitchen tongs before; but soon as meetin' was over, I went right straight up to him. My eyes was running with tears, I was so glad on account of James. But when he took my hand in his, I tell you the tears came faster. You see he squeezed so! Had serious notion I'd have to poultice my hand. But I knew just what he needed—a good talk on the duties before him; and I *did* talk to him well. First to last he never said a word, only sat still as a stone, listenin' to me, with those coal-black eyes of his. I tell you that man's joy was awful to see!"

"But I wanted to tell Mr. Wall—" endeavored the General.

"One moment, General," said his wife. "Solemn as I was, I couldn't help watching to see that man shake hands with your uncle, Mr. Wall; if he squeezed mine so, he'll bring the blood with *his*, I says to myself. Well, when your uncle saw him coming—I do think he is the wisest man, in *little* things as well as great, I ever knew—when he saw him coming, he jest gave him both of his hands clasped like together. See? He couldn't squeeze so hard that way, and it was jest as cordial—more so! Talk of Saul of Tarsus!" continued Mrs. General Likens, with energy. "If ever a gambling, horse-racing, cursing, desperate, outrageous sinner was struck down on his way to Damascus, he's the man. 'I'll try; but God must do it all in me!' them were his very words to your uncle. I thought it a bad sign he had so little to say; but he's held out so far, any way."

"What I wanted to say," said the patient General, "was only this: He told me yesterday, Brown Bob, not to let you go till he came. He wants you to help him about

something. Besides, he has something he wants to send to your uncle by you."

"Reminds me!" interrupted his wife. "Don't let me forget, child. I've fixed up a basket for you when you go. I was afraid I would forget, and fixed it up early this morning. I've put it on the fire-board there, all ready. Don't let me forget it! Talking of your uncle, Mr. Wall, reminds me of Hoppleton. Take off the things, Moll. Keep your seat, child. Yes, we'll excuse you gentlemen out on the piazza; General always smokes after breakfast—nigh all the time, for that matter. I wanted to ask you something about people there. You see, we lived a while in Hoppleton when we first moved out, till we could find a farm to suit; boarded at Moody's some months. And how's *he* doin'?"

"And Josiah Evers, too! Ah, yes; taught school here once. 'And so you actually believe there is such a place as hell—*actually* believe it!' he said to me after supper one Sunday night, smiling pityingly like. You see, Mr. Merkes had been preaching on the subject. 'Certainly I do,' says I; 'you don't think I doubt what the Bible says?'—'Certain it's in the Bible?' he said, smiling gently, as if he was talking with a willful child. I up and read him some of the passages in Scripture—you know them all—and Mr. Merkes's sermon had freshened me up in them. I felt real awful as I read them one after another as fast as I could hunt them up. All the time Josiah Evers sat leanin' back in his chair, hands together, turning one thumb over the other, smiling all the time, amused like, patiently like, as if I was tryin' to prove the moon was made of green cheese. He didn't interrupt me once—kept on smilin' so superior. 'What have you to say to all them?' I said, when I had finished. 'Nothing at all, Madam,' says he. 'Nothing at all! and yet deny the plain doctrine?' 'Ah, Madam!' says

he, heavin' a gentle sigh, a kind of patient melancholy on his face, 'it would take too long to explain to you.' 'But you can try,' says I; 'I ain't altogether a fool, though my opportunities have been small.' 'Well,' says he, 'there are a great many learned men in the world. Whole universities of them in Germany and at the North, men of profound learning, people who know infinitely more than any body in these parts, of course. These men,' says he, 'have thoroughly investigated the doctrine of a hell, an' find it all a mistake. Strange,' he went on saying to himself; 'same notion has prevailed in *every* nation; singular delusion. It's well enough to preach it to a certain class,' he went on to say; 'to your unfortunate negroes, Madam, for instance—it serves as a restraint upon the ignorant; only don't expect intelligent people to believe it,' he says, smiling.

"But we were called off just then to our negro meeting. 'Uncle Simeon,' says I, near the close, 'do you believe in a hell?' 'Yes, Missis,' says he, 'an' in a heaven, too, bless de Lord!' 'But, Uncle Simeon,' says I, 'some people say they don't believe there's any such place as hell.' 'They lie, Missis!' says he, not raising his head from that stick of his. 'But how must we prove it to them?' says I. 'No use tryin' to prove it to them, Missis,' says Uncle Simeon; 'dey know it already in dere hearts *widout* de Bible; a thousan' times over an' over again *in* de Bible. No man can *help* believe it, Missis. If he say he don't he lies, an' he knows it—no use foolin' with sitch!' And that was all Uncle Simeon had to say. Josiah Evers he turned as red as his own hair, but went back to smiling again.

"Ah, well, child, didn't we have it, we two, that night! Believe me, that man didn't believe in a word in the Bible. 'I accept,' says he, 'only those parts of the Bible my rea-

son, my intellect, approves. I subject every thing else in the world,' says he, 'to my own judgment, and I do the same by the Bible.' And so on, for half an hour, that man talked. 'But you mistake in other things, why not in this?' I said to him, over and over again. 'True, Madam,' he says, 'the understanding may err; I may have occasionally erred myself, but the *heart* never mistakes. What the heart says is always so. What I *feel* to be true is invariably true. We always go by what we *feel*.' 'God forbid *I* should!' says I.

"Then it flashed upon me—you see, it was soon after his affair with Araminta Allen—'The heart is a safe and infallible guide, is it?' says I; 'we may always travel where our feelings lead us, safe and sure?' 'Yes, Ma'am,' says he; 'our intuitions never mislead.' 'How, then, did it happen so about Araminta?' I asked him, plump! Catch him? not exactly! Quick as a flash he says, 'The *heart* had nothing to do with that whatever, Ma'am. Love her, and that snuff-stick 'tween her lips? Faugh!' 'No, it was not *her*, it was her negroes you wanted,' says I, finishing his remark for him; 'I knew it.' To think that man should acknowledge *that* rather than give up his argument!"

But John endeavors to turn the torrent of talk by some question in regard to the General.

"Oh, as to the General," Mrs. General Likens makes answer, pouring her speech instantly that way, "he is an amazin' close observer, as well as a man of the strongest sort of sense. No wonder; he has all his time for it; he don't have to work now for a living. We've enough and to spare, thank the Lord! He don't care to speculate or try to get richer. Then I carry all the little matters on the place smoothly on for him; he has only field matters to look after. He hasn't any children, now James is gone,

to worry about—great big boys to see after, or girls growin' up dressin' and followed up by their beaux. Nor any grandchildren, even, to climb about his knees, and pull his hair, and put their hands in his pockets—nothing to disturb him in the world. Besides, he has lived in the thick of people all his life. He's such an excellent listener, you see; it's amazin' how much he has heard from me, let alone other people, in the thirty years we've been married. He takes vast deal more interest in religious matters, since that blessed meeting especially, than in any thin' else. So he sets out there on the piazza, or by the fire, and reads his Bible and his religious newspaper, and smokes and thinks nigh all the time. Look here, child," went on Mrs. General Likens, as a sudden thought smote her; "was it our Mr. Merkes urged young Mr. Wall to come out here on this visit and preach for him?"

"No, Madam," said John, smiling as she spoke, "Mr. Wall asked Mr. Merkes when he was last at our house, to ask his nephew to come. He afterwards told his nephew he had a special reason for doing so."

"Just as I thought!" exclaimed her companion, triumphantly. "I never knew Mr. Merkes ask a minister to come and preach for him in my life, except they were actually on the ground, you know. One day Mr. Merkes was here to see us. I saw him long before he got to the front gate, an' saw he looked bluer than usual, even. Says I, 'General'—the General was sitting in his chair smoking—'General, I'm goin' to try an experiment with Mr. Merkes.' You see, child, I was full of fun when I was a girl, dressin' up, dancin' all night when I had a chance, leading my beaux a time of it, a regular torn-down piece; the standing wonder to me is how I ever married such a man as the General there, so grave and solid. 'Well,' the General says, 'be perfectly respectful, Polly. Remember

he is our pastor, whom we are bound to love and revere.' 'Never fear,' says I; 'I've no disposition to do otherwise.' Mr. Merkes came in; we gave him hearty welcome. There he sat and talked for half an hour. I never saw him so low down in my life; nothing could cheer him. At last, 'Mr. Merkes,' said I, 'how did you happen to have Mr. Jones preach for you Sunday before last? He's a good man—means well, I dare say; but he stammers so when he gets warmed to his sermon it's painful to hear him.' An' so I went on—and it was nothing but the truth about Mr. Jones, though I never allow myself to talk that way of ministers. Jest as I thought. The moment I began to run Mr. Jones down as a preacher Mr. Merkes began to brighten up. As I went on he got more and more cheerful, till at last he actually smiled. You see I might have tried running down that Ishmael Spang and *his* preaching—easy thing to do, goodness knows; or I might have got on the doctrines of other denominations—he used to be quite cheery hearing them talked against, you understand; only they was worn out by constant use. Mr. Merkes he shook his head gently, said Mr. Jones had the best intentions in the world; he *did* hesitate and stammer very sadly, too—got quite cheerful in fact. I've noticed Mr. Merkes close, years now; have often watched him rise and fall, in one half hour, like a feather, a dozen times. Tell him of some rich man—his money, and house, and things—and down he goes. Tell him about somebody's crop failing, or negroes dying, or wheat rusting, and up he goes. But it's about churches and ministers he's most sensitive, specially in his own denomination. I never saw him so peart in my life as he was when poor Mr. Jones had his trouble—you've heard about it—with his church. All the time Mr. Merkes was moaning, and deploring, and shaking his head, and in wonderful spirits,

for him. That Mr. Wall is the only preacher he can bear to hear praised, and he winces a good deal at that; would rather that people should talk of something else. But dear me, child, I am ashamed of myself to be speaking so of our minister. He's a most an exc'lent man, would rather die at the stake than not, if duty called; only he's had so much trouble, you see."

And Mrs. General Likens paused, not because she was out of breath—that she never had been in her life,—but because she had now washed up the breakfast things.

"I see Brown Bob Long just lighting from that horse of his at the front gate, child," said she, rising. "Suppose we look around a little. I don't want to see him squeeze your hands so—it's awful!"

"But did you mention to the General about what we were speaking of?" asked John, as they went out by the back-door, dreading lest there should be no other interval of silence before she left.

"First thing when we'd got to bed las' night," was the reply. "The General hates it mightily—your trying to teach school, I mean; but we'll both be proud to have you stay with us. He'll see all about it and write to you as soon as he can. See that rooster? He always puts me in mind—so round and slow and showy like—of that Colonel Mills. There isn't one of my hens but puts me in mind of somebody I know. See that short-legged pullet?—always 'minds me of a little freckled girl running round in a long wolsey frock. Colonel Mills—ah yes! I've got a yellow cow, our best milker; she's the living image of Mrs. Colonel Mills. You see, we boarded in Hoppleton before we bought this place—know every body there. And their son David, poor fellow! could explain it all to you, child, how it happened, if you was a married woman. And there's that Louisiana too—bouncing piece she is!

She can't talk, poor thing ! but she's good to look at, isn't she ? I tell you what !" said Mrs. General Likens, pausing as she unlocked the hen-house door, and turning upon her companion with prophecy in her face and tones. "That girl is the very wife, exactly, for young Mr. Wall."

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Robert Long arrives upon Bobasheela.

PERFECTLY aware, dear reader, that you are wincing a little under Mrs. General Likens—becoming even desperate to break out of the meshes of her incessant spinning—yet how could you have otherwise learned to know that estimable lady as her other visitors do?

We alike hail, however, the arrival at this juncture of Brown Bob Long, and hasten upon the front piazza to greet him, leaving John to her fate.

Not from the sands of Arabia had Brown Bob Long obtained his horse—a shaggy white pony—the abundant hair of his tail and mane thickly clotted with cockle-burs. Upon his right shoulder is branded a mystic hieroglyphic, twelve inches across, marking his ownership, the result of a week's designing by Mr. Long with the end of his ramrod, on the sand in front of his cabin. The ticks have damaged his left ear, and it is doubled down, giving him an expression of being in joke all the time. Mr. Bob Long is very tall—so much so that on his very small steed his feet reach the ground almost, leaving the impression upon your mind as he rides up that the pony is so slight a part of Mr. Long's travelling equipage as to be better dispensed with than not. As he alights you observe that his is only the naked tree or wooden frame of a saddle, without any covering or trimming whatever, and that rawhide enters largely into the construction of his bridle. The value of the whole outfit is accumulated in the huge wooden stirrups,

with broad leathers, extending so near the earth that, when tied to a tree at a little distance, the pony exhibits the phenomenon of an animal having apparently three legs on a side.

According to the invariable custom of the country, Mr. Long rides up to the front fence and halts, without the least intimation that he intends to get off. General Likens rises and calls to him to "'Light!" standing on the front step of the piazza. Mr. Long retains his seat, and the General walks out to the fence, pipe in mouth, and repeats the request: all according to the ritual of that region. "Ah, thank you," says Mr. Long, and drawing one foot out of the stirrup, seats himself more comfortably sideways in the saddle for a talk. General Likens is familiar with established usage, and, leaning against the fence, the topics of health on both sides; then the state of the weather, past, present, and to come; then the crops past, the prospect of crops to come. Then, in due order, the General again says, "'Light, won't you?" Mr. Long replies, with some hesitation, "Ah, thank you; I'll come in an' get a gourd of water." A long rifle in his hand, some eighty feet of rope hanging in a coil upon the horn of his saddle, a tangle of powder-horn and shot-pouches about his breast, and a spur on each heel considerably larger than a dollar, make the getting off rather a labor than otherwise, especially as the temperament of Bobasheela, the pony, renders his standing still for an instant an impossibility.

The young minister is undecided a moment as they approach the piazza; but he remembers Cranmer at the stake, and cheerfully holds out his right hand to martyrdom. The squeeze wherewith it is grasped and held produces in the face of the sufferer a singular conflict of serious pain therefrom with that real pleasure wherewith

one instinctively greets a thorough, healthy, wholesome human being. Mr. Long is manifestly glad to see him, and shows it. Mr. Long prefers keeping upon his head his exceedingly slouched wool hat, but seats himself on a hide-bottomed chair, tilts it back against a pillar of the piazza, and then goes through the established topics in their established order with Mr. Wall. That gentleman and all his uncle's family are well. Mr. Long has brought all his family with him in his saddle, as he informs the young minister, and, yes, *he* is well. The weather has been, is now, promises to continue, pleasant; both are agreed upon that point. Mr. Wall pleads ignorance of the crops about Hoppleton—is, in fact, profoundly indifferent upon the subject, and listens to Mr. Long's opinions in the matter without being at all able to restate those opinions when he has finished. The existence of, or necessity for, crops has never as yet fairly entered his mind. Crops were not at all a subject of thought in the Seminary.

The established topics being exhausted in their due order, Mr. Long produces a knife eight inches in length from his right breeches-pocket, a bar of tobacco from the left, and supplies himself with an immensely large quid, previously offering the same to his friend. He then works the hind legs of his chair forward that it may tilt in a larger angle with the pillar, settles himself in it, and considers himself at home. Mr. Wall is anxious to be cordial and sociable, and is dragging his mind for something to say. General Likens has long ago surrendered the business of entertaining and drawing out his guests to his wife, but she is performing that duty just now upon a fairer visitor in the back premises.

“Well, an' what's the good word with you?” their host therefore asks at last, this being the next question in order according to the rubric of society in that section.

"Nothin', well, nothin'," is the reply. "I'm told Bill Meggar's ribs I bruk 'er gettin' well. He *would* hev it, you know!" added Mr. Long, appealingly. "Devel helping them, they might have coaxed me into takin' that whisky; that is, if the good Lord had forsaken me—perhaps. But as to *makin'* me drink, pourin' it down, you see, it ain't to be did!" and Mr. Long is again silent.

"Started early?" tries the General again.

"Not very; almost daybreak—had only the fifteen miles to ride," is the reply.

"Don't see that fat buck," says the General.

"Not shot yet," replies Mr. Long, carelessly. "'Fraid it might spile before he got home; not do it till the last moment."

"Indians would say you'd rubbed end of your rifle with med'cine; deer seem to swarm so about it," says the General.

"Don't find much honey there to speak of," says Mr. Long, taking up his rifle instinctively from the baluster against which he has leaned it, and laying it across his knees with a caressing motion.

"Remember what Jacob said to his father the day he brought the old man that kid-meat he had fixed up for ven'son?" asks the General, with his pipe-stem between his teeth.

"'The Lord thy God brought it me,'" says Mr. Long, promptly, as if he had just laid the Bible aside from reading that passage. "But then, you know, he lied," adds Mr. Long. The General nods, reflectively.

"I wouldn't dare to say any thing of that sort about *my* hunting," says the hunter, in a lower voice, and with downcast eyes. "Only I do know one thing, my shootin' 'll do better to tie to than it did before, you know, and by a long sight."

The General considers this statement as he smokes.

“Never a single drop, say, since then?” he asks at last, regarding his swarthy guest with new interest—with an anxious curiosity even.

The hunter shakes his head with a smile.

“Nor a piece of pasteboard, say? Not once?”

Another shake of the head in negation.

“Nor a quarter race?”

Another shake still more decided.

“How about that swearing? nary oath?”

Mr. Long’s smile vanishes, leaving a troubled look.

“No, General, but mighty nigh onst, I tell you,” he says. “It was Bobasheela yonder; he laid down with me in Boggy Creek, one cold mornin’ I was after a deer—it fairly started a cuss before I knew it, but it didn’t reach my mouth. No, sir!”

The General takes his pipe from his mouth, and looks at his visitor yet more anxiously as he asks, “Nor—nothin’ else?”

Mr. Long understands the delicate question perfectly. With a frank smile over the whole of his face he shakes his head in the negative decidedly, and the General resumes his pipe with profound satisfaction. “You will excuse my askin’?” he says after further consideration.

“Certainly, an’ more than welcome,” replies the hunter promptly, and with a glad face.

Mr. Wall is desirous to break the silence that ensues. His field of thought for the last few years yields him not, however, a single grain for the occasion.

“Religion is a most an excellent thing,” the General announces, therefore, after further reflection along the same line. “To guide a man, say,” he explains.

“Yes, General,” is the reply; “but specially to hold in a man. It’s its *holdin’-in* power strikes me most. It’s

wonderful!" says the hunter, with emphasis. "There's no gettin' round the fact; it must be—God!"

Mr. Long lets his chair down upon its four legs that he may search to better advantage a breast-pocket under his buckskin hunting-shirt. "It's an astonishin' passage," he says as he searches. "'Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation'—*kept!* that's what I look it—its *φρουρέω*, you rec'lect," he adds, turning on Mr. Wall, as he draws a little book from his bosom and searches it for the place.

"Frowreo!" exclaims that individual, bewildered.

"That's the verb, you know; it's *φρουρουμένους* in the passage. Now what I want to know is this," adds the hunter: "does the Greek mean 'kept' as a jailer keeps a pris'ner, or 'kept' as a scout keeps a lookout?"

It takes some little time for the one addressed to overcome his surprise in getting Greek from such an unexpected source. It is wine to him from a spring which he hardly supposed would yield any water, even, but of the muddiest.

Mr. Long has supplied him with a subject of conversation entirely to his taste, and, suppressing his surprise for the moment, he discusses the passage with zest. There are other passages to be examined after this one, and the young theologian grows somewhat cautious in his explanations as they proceed; there is no telling but the bronzed hunter may know more about it than he. The General smokes his pipe out of sight below them, with a satisfaction in having such conversation in his house too.

"But how did you come to learn the Greek, Mr. Long?" asks the young minister at length; "and I wonder my uncle never told me about it," he added.

"Your uncle's got a sight of things more important than me to talk about. Well, it's too long a story for the

little Greek I know," replies the hunter. "You wouldn't believe it, but I was fitted for college when I was a boy. Sorry to say my father was an infidel. He'd set his heart on my getting a good education, if 'twas only to do so much more damage to religion. But he was very dissipated—sing'lar for his own son to say so, but it was a fact. I went on to college, entered the Freshman class one Monday morning; was expelled from college next Saturday afternoon; got on a terrible spree; never once thought they'd object to *that*!"

"You had learned the Greek when a boy, then?" asks Charles.

"Mighty little," replies his companion. "No; it was in this way: You see, I ran away from home. Father gave me a little too much beating when I got back from college in disgrace. I was getting at that age, you know, a boy won't stand a stick—specially a wild chap like me. Yes, I ran away, and have been in the woods ever sence. Yes, took to the woods, you see, like the wild animal I was."

"But how about the Greek?" asks Charles, for his new friend is slow in answering his question.

"Well, the General can tell you," says the hunter, glancing at that individual, "what a terrible hard case I've been; up to every sort of wickedness an' devilment I *do* suppose," he continued, slowly and with some embarrassment, "a man ever was guilty of. It's awful to think of, General, what a case I have been!" he adds, with sincerest solemnity.

The General nods his head in grave but entire concurrence—taking his pipe from his mouth to add to the solemnity of his assent.

"I've heard of men," continues the hunter, "when they became Christians, love to talk—especially about the first of their joining the church—of how bad they've been.

They'd take a sort o' pleasure in telling how particularly bad they'd been before. It always seemed to me like a kind o' glorying in their past wickedness; like a kind o' being too certain sure of never getting back into the rock whence they were hewn, of never slipping back into the hole of the pit whence they were digged. I don't know. However! I don't like to look much behind *me*. With me it's a sort of flight from Sodom, a kind of escape for thy life—"Look not behind thee!" I don't know. I hate to talk much about my religion. There's precious little to talk about—my part in it, I mean. Besides, it's like hot water in a camp-kettle a-boiling. I have a sort of fear that hot kind of religion will all pass off in talking. Humph! and here I am taking it out in talking this minute, running other people's religion down at that—people a sight better than I am!"

"But you haven't told me about the Greek yet," says Charles Wall, clinging to the point.

"It was only this," replies the hunter, speaking with a singular conflict in his face between perfect frankness and a reluctance to talk of himself; "when it all first began, after I got a little over that first great joy—oh, isn't it wonderful, wonderful He should so love us!" he said to Charles, with the simplicity of a child, held, in passing, by the Truth ever fresh in its infinite wonder to his mind.

The young minister bowed his head with fast filling eyes. The fact, old in itself as Eternity, over-familiar to him from perpetual presentation, came with a newness to his ears; there was something in the language, and more in the expression of the hunter's face, as if Calvary was an event of yesterday's occurrence, an event arrived as to-day's telegram.

"You see," continues the hunter, after a pause, pushing up his old felt hat from his bronzed face, "after I began

to get a little used to the astonishing fact of the case—I suppose it must be something like when a man first comes into a tremendous fortune, kind of bewildered with happiness, only vastly more so in this case, at the start—when I could look around me a little I says to myself, ‘Bob Long, I know mighty little about you, an’ nothing good. But I know one thing. You’d a million times over better never been born than tumble back again into what you were. Sow that is washed to her wallowin’—look out! You are only just on the edge like, your feet barely on the edge, nothing more. Now,’ says I, ‘your plan is to go into this new matter with all the force you’ve got. No danger it’ll be too much! So I went to reading the Bible—not only a chapter or so every day, but *at* it, you’ll understand, at it! like a man mauling rails; at it like into a business—like into a kind of work should take up as much of my time and thoughts and feelings as possible. I’m afraid you can’t understand,” he added, anxiously.

“Yes I do,” replied Charles, “perfectly. My uncle is a man of very ardent temperament—very active in whatever he undertakes. He has often told me that the grand reason he entered the ministry was just that. He was afraid unless he gave himself up altogether to religion by becoming a minister of the gospel—”

“Exactly,” interrupted the hunter, with kindled eye. “Had to pitch in head foremost, whole body, or not at all! I know his sort—either a very good man or an exceedin’ wicked one! Precisely what I felt. So, when I had read the Bible through once or twice, I says to myself, ‘now, what next?’ You see, I was like a man running in the snow, ’fraid to stop running lest I might begin to freeze; like a buck with the dogs after him—can’t afford to stop even to scratch! One day it struck me like a slug. It was at church one time Mr. Merkes was explaining what

the Greek was of some passage he had up ; half the people asleep, I'm bound to say—excuse me, General, I forgot you was one of them ! Yes, like a slug. Why not learn to read the Testament in the language it was written in ? Hard work, I know ; but that's just what I need—something to keep me at it hard ! Long time ? Very well, when I get through with it I'll be just that much farther on the road. So at it I went—and that's all."

"But how did you manage ?" asked Charles.

"Very easy when I came up with the thing. I rode over to Hoppleton. Your uncle laughed and let me have the books out of his book-case—Grammar, Lexicon, and Greek Testament. I offered to pay him. 'Pshaw, Mr. Long ! no,' he says ; 'you'll only have them a little while : soon send them back.' 'We'll see,' says I. Few months afterwards I sent him the money, and back he sends it. Then I tried him with ven'son—he couldn't send that back well."

"But I don't understand yet," says Charles. "How do you find time and place for study ?"

"Plenty of time, especially of winter nights. My cabin's the place, of course ; why not ?"

"But didn't you find it very difficult studying alone, without a teacher ?" asks Charles, greatly interested.

"I broke down right at the start," says the hunter, knocking up the broad and hanging rim of his hat from his brow with a back-handed motion, and entering with increasing energy on his narration. "You see it was this way, and you'll be amazed what a fool I was. It was the alphabet. There was Alpha, Beta, and the rest. I soon had them by heart. Now, says I to myself, put any two of these letters together—say Alpha, Beta—and what in creation does Alpha, Beta, spell ? How *can* a fellow combine the two sounds into one sound ? Did you ever know

such a fool? Believe it? I rode over to your uncle to ask him. I thought he never would stop laughing: you know what a sunny, happy sort of man he is. 'Don't know your a, b, abs, Mr. Long? well!' he says. Then he showed me the places in Romans, Galatians, Mark, where it says, Abba, Father. But the idea of giving Greek letters, with the names they have, English sounds! I declare I can't see into it to this day."

"And how after that?" asks Charles, laughing.

"No difficulty at all; smooth and easy as you please, the rest of the trail. You see, when a man once gets fairly *on* the trail, he's all safe."

"But you seem to have done with this matter—I mean as a thing requiring hard labor—close attention," says the young minister.

"Well, I have read the Testament through only once in the Greek yet. Slow work it was, something like hacking and hewing and squeezing one's way through a cane-brake after a bear. Coming upon and getting hold of the exact meanin' of a passage in its very hole like—it's as exciting as hunting itself. The very work's a pleasure, most pleasure when it's hardest. You know children like nuts more'n any thing else, just because they've got to crack the shell to get at the kernels. Nobody cares for kernels in a clean plate all picked out already. And then when you get at the kernel of a hard passage, after hours of hammering with lexicon an' grammar, it's not only fresh and new, and exactly hits like, but it's fixed in your memory for ever and ever. I never enjoyed myself more than there in my cabin of a winter night, lyin' on a bearskin before the fire, working away with my books—blaze of the pine-knots on the page. But I'll tell you one thing," said the hunter, bringing his chair down upon its four legs again, while he searched under his red flannel shirt, beneath

the heavy tangle of shot-pouches, and powder-flask, and dangling chargers of antelope-horn, and the like.

"And what is that?" asked Charles, awaiting with interest the result of the search.

"This," said the hunter at last, producing a long, thin volume from his bosom. "Greek isn't as easy as it might be, 'specially to a fellow in his cabin fifty miles from any help, an' just beginning. But I tell you," he continued, with gravest sincerity, "it's nothing to the Hebrew—not a circumstance!"

"Hebrew!" ejaculated Mr. Wall.

"I tell you," said the hunter, evidently with the emphasis of painful experience, "Hebrew is *tough*!"

"Do I understand you to say you've undertaken the Hebrew?" asked his companion, with rapidly increasing surprise, interest, and sympathy.

"You may well say *undertaken* it; and it's the heaviest job I ever did undertake. Yes, sir," said Mr. Long, with an almost exhausted look upon his brown face: not an atom of boastfulness in the man.

"But, my dear sir, what induced you—?" began his companion.

"Same reason," replied the hunter. "Soon as the Greek began to get a little easy, you know, a little broken to my bridle, you see—though I'm far enough from knowing much about it yet—I began to look around for something else in regard to religion to go into, you understand—something to keep me hard at it; every spare minute at work rushing it forward. The day I finished the New Testament in the Greek, 'Now,' says I to myself, and to your uncle too, for I rode over to see him—'now for the *Old* Testament in *its* original language.' It's in the *Old* Testament that amazin' Fifty-first Psalm is, you know—'Have mercy upon me'—you remember? If I do know a place

in the Bible, if I *oughter* know a place in all the Bible, it's *that*, you know. Well, your uncle loaned me Lexicon, Manual, Grammar, an' Bible—only he didn't laugh this time; the tears somehow came into his eyes, an' before he let me off he insisted upon prayin' with me. Oh! if you only *could* manage to make such a man as him! If there's something in blood in horses—an' I guess I ought to know: many's the hour I've spent, and the dollar I've won, and lost too, for that matter, on race-course,—then there must be something in blood in men. You're of good stock, any how. Though I'm bound to say," the speaker added, after some reflection, "you can never, of course, come to be quite all your uncle is: you know no man can ever quite come to be *that*!" he adds, as if stating a self-evident proposition, his eyes fastened like those of a little child on his new friend, who assents heartily thereto, and then adds,

"Thank you; but how did you succeed about the Hebrew?"

"That's yet to know," said Mr. Long, with a somewhat troubled face. "I've been at it only some two or three months, or so. It's such a sing'lar language. The letters are like nothing else in the world, unless it is a Mexican horse-brand. And then those points, little dots, you know, swarmin' over the whole page, and botherin' one like gnats. I'm told they've come into the language since Moses. *He* never would have put them there. They're worse than the lice he cursed the Egyptians with, crawlin' so, beg your pardon, over every single word an' letter! I don't care so much about having to read backward, like a bear backing towards its hole fighting the dogs off with its paws—only there's such a whirl of confusion about piecing out the words, first at one end an' then at the other; then there's that constant hop an' skip with a fellow to guess

what lies between ; then that *Sh'wa simple*, an' *Sh'wa compound*, *Pattah furtive*, *Daghesh forty* an' *Daghesh leny*, *Mappik* and *Raphe*, and a thousand things of the sort. I tell you, I've lain there on that bearskin by the fire working at it till the sweat would pour down ! Twenty times I've shut the books up and put them in my old box for good. Humph ! And I've sat and looked at the chest those books was in as if it was a kind of cage of varmints, each all claws and teeth. I've felt, at times, actually afraid of them books ! Then I would say, ' You think I can't, do you ? I'll tame you, if it takes years ! ' Next leisure time I'm sure to let them out and go at it again ! You see, when once I get after any thing I hate to give it up, if it's only a squirrel. One thing I know, that is, I'll never have to hunt up something more to go at ; that Hebrew'll keep me hard at it, if I live that long, for next fifty years !

" But here's one thing," added the hunter, " brought me over to-day. Your uncle's a little rusty, he says—been so long from the Seminary. He told me to hold on till you came out—you'll be fresh from it, he said. So I want you to explain this thing to me—it's the hardest knot I've come on yet."

So saying, Mr. Long draws up his chair close beside his new friend, who is both pleased and a little alarmed at the prospect. Mr. Long opens the grammar before them—its page blackened and worn with unmistakable struggle. For accuracy he draws the bowie-knife from its leathern sheath at his waist and points out the place on the page. " Be a little keerful," he says ; " you see I keep it sharp as possible. When you've shot your deer you must cut a good, deep, clean gash to let out all the blood—meat's spiled if you don't. It's the only thing in close quarters with a bear, too ; wrap up your left hand in your saddle-blanket, say, and hold it out to him ; as he grabs it with

his paws you have your knife ready in your right, and let him have all of it, every inch, just under the left fore-shoulder, he'll never say 'beans' again! Only that ain't what we're after just now."

The freshly elected and inaugurated Professor of Hebrew can not help glancing at the hand which holds the knife to the page—huge and hairy, and almost black from long roughing it. The little finger is lacking—"bitten off by a bear cub I was trying to raise by hand; you see he sucked too hard," was the explanation subsequently given. There is a gash or two besides, to match similar scars on one cheek. As to his muscular body under the flannel shirt, it is tattooed by the claws of wild animals and wilder boon companions in the days of his folly, in a manner which would insure his instant election as King of the Cannibal Islands had he moved in that circle of society.

Mr. Long has removed his voluminous hat altogether from his head, to enable him to sit nearer his new friend over the page, as well as to allow his intellectual organs full play. He is exceeding rough, but very far from homely, as he bends over the page, satisfying very well a young lady's idea of that magnificent pirate who is eternally announcing—on the piano—to the unwearied object of his affections, "This night and forever my bride thou must be!" As he listens to Mr. Wall's explanation, he is engaged, in the intensity of his attention, in curling together a lock of his black whiskers and forcing it into the corner of his mouth on that side, listening and biting. General Likens sits to one side in his arm-chair, his pipe in his mouth and his feet on the balusters of the piazza, his chair being tilted back for that purpose, serenely satisfied, although utterly forgotten and lost sight of by his guests.

Once or twice Mrs. General Likens, with the scent of

fresh prey, has appeared on the doorway of the house from within. The watchful General has on each occasion, however, taken his pipe from his lips to shake his head at her not to disturb his guests in their sacred studies, and has thus dispersed her for the time. She complies the more willingly, both because she dreads the grasp of Mr. Long's hand, and because John is yet alive within to be further entertained.

And so the hours glide along. The Hebraists pursue their labors—Mr. Long lunching incessantly on the ends of his whiskers, and his instructor perfectly at home with the familiar book in his grasp. The very aroma of seminary and lecture-room is upon its pages. The General smokes, fills and refills his cob-pipe, and smokes again, thinking many things, and listening, somewhat superficially, to the rattle of the Hebrew. The sun shines bright, and the bees are coming and going at their stand by the front paling. In the orchard adjacent the guinea-hens have clustered into a knot, and keep up a steady and unanimous potrack! potrack! off to themselves together, like politicians on both sides at Washington, exciting and emulating each other in discord, luxuriating in senseless jargon, while the bees toil and the hens cluck their straggling charges here and there in the front yard, as indifferent to their racket as are the people, absorbed about their homes and honest business, to the empty uproar aforesaid. If bees and poultry and men reasoned correctly, they would all agree that it is, after all, an admirable arrangement by which all the bad humors of the body social are brought to a head in the persons of these politicians, feathered and unfeathered.

Yes, it is well the most fevered ones—of the human species we now speak—are herded off to themselves—for a good part of the time, at any rate—in the domed and

columned lazaretto at Washington, and every capital, infecting and exhausting themselves only upon each other. If those who live there, where breaks the boil of the whole body politic, fancy their location a healthful one, very well. But this is a parenthesis only, a remark altogether irrelevant, penned up here to itself, and not to be permitted to run at large over these pages.

"I must step out to look after dinner, child," Mrs. General Likens says, at last, to John, who cheerfully assents. "Only don't let me forget to give you your basket when you *must* go," adds that lady, catching sight of that article on the mantle as she is passing out. "And, dear me," she hastens back to remark, "as I live, yonder comes Araminta Allen, to make a call on you. She'll stay to dinner, and you must entertain her, child, while I see about things. She's mighty free of speech, dear; she's rich, bless you! Be a little on your guard. 'Member, she's the one sent that Josiah Evers whirling. Don't give her any hold on you any way—only I know you won't. Safest plan, child, for us all is to start her about Amelia Ann and Mr. Merkes; that'll keep her busy all her stay, I'll warrant. You see, Mr. Merkes, he said at the funeral he was nigh certain sure Amelia Ann was lost; died, you must have heard of it, soon after dancin' all night. Araminta's only sister she was. An' Araminta, she never has stopped abusin' poor Mr. Merkes for it five minutes at a time, an' never will. Bless you, she'll begin about it as soon's she sees you! Talk? My! You leave it all to me. I'll fix it!" With this rather unnecessary injunction Mrs. General Likens hurried from the room, first to receive and send in her new guest, and then to the kitchen, to turn a little more steam, figuratively speaking, upon the preparations for dinner.

CHAPTER XII.

Another Arrival, and the Return Home.

BUG BURLESON, in charge of Sally, her little black nurse, or rather Sally in charge of Bug, happened to be, the same day, at Mr. Burleson's front gate, there in Hoppleton, when her brother Edward drives up. The prompt and imperative demand of the Bug to be taken instantly out riding receives from him a refusal as prompt and decided, as he hurries into the house to leave a word explaining his absence.

Now, in the reasoning of Bug, a pressing emergency required instant remedy. At her command Sally lifted her charge into the buggy, holding up also the leathern curtain of its seat while Bug creeps beneath the same. In justice to Sally, she acted under protest. There had been no case so far in her short career in which Bug had failed to have her own way with every member of the family, to say nothing of Sally.

Scarcely had Sally lodged Bug under the seat when Burleson reappeared at the front door, leaving her no choice but to fly for her life. It was true the horse was spirited, and standing unfastened; but there is an exception to the laws of nature when a child is concerned. The horse did not run away, though Rarey himself would have justified him if he had; and his master soon had him doing his best along the road, not dreaming of the passenger under his seat. As it happened, the canvas cover of the buggy had been folded away under it; and into this Bug

had managed to nestle herself as snug as her namesake in a rug. Her plan was to remain hidden there until sufficiently far from home to insure her, at least, a good long ride in being carried back. The darkness and the motion soon sent her to sleep, however, tired already from play and abundance of previous mischief; and the unconscious brother is near twenty miles on his road when a sudden cry from beneath him, and a kick against his boot, nearly sends him out of his buggy with surprise. He reins up his horse, and proceeds to draw his passenger from under deck. It is something of a job; for Bug is very plump and the fit a tight one, and his horse restless. He has her, at last, standing between his knees, very much soiled and astonished, her flaxen hair over her rosy face, a vast deal too sweet and audacious to be angry with.

"You break my whole trip completely up, you little imp of—light!" he says, kissing her half-awakened face, and turning his horse short around in the road homeward.

"But no! I'll try it now; she won't understand us," he adds in the same breath, turning his horse back again; and so drives on with added speed.

"Why, Bug, what *did* you get in for?" he asks at last, his wrath beginning to rekindle.

"Thithter Nan," explains that insect.

"Sister Nan! No, Madam; Nan wouldn't do it; not fun enough in her for that. Besides I left her in the parlor," says Burleson. "Little fibber!"

"Oh, she is *tho* croth," says Bug, in further explanation. "She *thcolds* and *thcolds* *tho*! She *thes* I'm a bother and a *petht*. I *wath* running away from her, you *thee*! Oh, brother Ned, she is *tho* croth!" says Bug, with all her emphasis, anxious to justify her course, and delighted at the direction they are going. "Thally *thes* her black mammy *thes* it's because *thithter* Nan can't get a *huthband*. She

thcolds in the houth, and she thcolds in the garden, and she thcolds in the kitchen! And Thally thes her black mammy thes it's awful now, and it's getting wus and wus every day! Drive on, brother Ned; don't leth go back to her any more!"

Bug prattles away in a steady stream. But Burleson is full of his own thoughts. The one chime thereof are John, Louisiana! John, Louisiana! He can not say when the chime begun, but it has rung in his ear in office, at table, in midnight wakings, very steadily for some time now. The worst of it is, the chime is ringing louder and still louder every passing day. Besides, there is a kind of sense of Wall walking steadily before him, he near behind, endeavoring to pass Wall on the one side or the other all the time, and so far unable to do it. With any body else—somebody with whom he can be at open war—the case would be different. But Wall is an annoyance to him just so much the more as that he can not but sincerely like him.

"Hang him, if he'd only become crazy enough to marry Nan!" he says at last aloud.

"Marry thithter Nan. Oh, I'm tho glad!" says Bug, with a clap of the hands which frightens his horse, and recalls him to himself.

An hour or so more and the brother drives up to General Likens's front gate.

"Thank you, you see I have!" says Burleson, in his frank, cordial way to General Likens's invitation to alight; the General standing, with hand shading his eyes, on the front porch. "I had business in this neighborhood, and venture to stop a moment," he adds to the company on the piazza, after due introduction and salutation. Bug smuggled herself in.

"Yeth, because thithter Nan—" begins Bug.

"Hush, Bug!" says Burleson, with his hand on her mouth, and Bug finishes her sentence in John's ear, into whose lap she has climbed, as being the only friend there.

"And your name is Bug?" says Mrs. General Likens, returning from her perpetual excursions in and out of the house.

"Yeth, and I'm *tho* hungry!" is the prompt reply.

Nothing could have gratified Mrs. General Likens more; next to reading her verses to her guests, or talking to them, nothing pleased her more than feeding them. And so John and Bug disappear with their hostess into the house, where soap and comb, as well as cake, are called into requisition.

The General, after a question or two, resumes his pipe, one guest happier than before—a little proud, too, of the visit from the handsome son of his old Hoppleton acquaintance. His wife knew better than that from the first. The more that lady considers the matter, as she cuts cake in rapid succession of slices for Bug, the more is she reconciled to it. The thing is too transparent for her even to pride herself at all upon seeing through it all at the first glance. "Teachin' school!" she exclaims to herself; "not so soon, I guess!"

As to Wall, after his first pleased surprise at seeing Burleson—after being for the moment particularly gratified to learn that he is to have his company on the road to Hoppleton in the morning—on further reflection he is not so certain he is glad to see him at last.

"Yes, I'll be going back to-morrow; that is"—Burleson adds, with laughing wave of his hand towards the General,—"if the General will give Bug and myself a pallet on the floor for to-night."

"Twenty," says the General, without removing his pipe. Now why was it that Burleson's coming had cast a

kind of damp upon the party? Wall sat thinking even at the supper-table. John opposite him there had nothing to say. Nothing occurred to the General after he had helped all from the broiled chickens before him. Mr. Long ate, from long habit, in silence. Bug occupied a chair beside John at the table, kept awake after her long ride only by a species of cake upon her plate new to her palate.

"But where is Mr. Long?" asks Mr. Wall, when they come to sit down to the breakfast-table next morning.

"Up and off before day. Said he allowed to meet you on Plum Creek. It's just half-way on the road to town. Mighty apt to do it," said the General.

But Mr. Wall entirely forgets Mr. Long when they come to start for Hoppleton.

"Suppose I relieve Miss John of you," says Burleson, as they stand beside their respective buggies awaiting that lady, who is keeping them waiting, according to the inalienable and immemorial usage of every female from Lot's wife, and before that, to the present hour.

"Relieve Miss John of me?" asks Mr. Wall, with the dignity of a clergyman, only as an excuse to hesitate.

"Well, relieve you of Miss John, then," explains Burleson, coolly. "She must be tired of you by this time; let her get tired of me a little. Better let her ride back with me."

Most assuredly not, replies Mr. Wall, promptly, in his heart. "Certainly, if she wishes it," he says in the same instant with his lips.

"And you can have Bug with you," adds Burleson, with great kindness, and as a happy thought. At this instant Miss John appears.

"I like to have forgotten it, child," says Mrs. General Likens, who accompanies her, basket in hand. "But I remembered it this morning, and put in more. I've filled it

full ; I hope you'll find it good," and the old lady deposits the heavy basket carefully under the seat of Wall's buggy beside valise and carpet-bag.

"Mr. Wall insists you shall ride with me," says Burleson ; "I could not get off from him at all." And that young gentleman decided her hesitation by assisting her in accordingly. Mrs. General Likens bestows a nudge with her elbow upon the General, who stands by her side, and a smiling glance upon Miss John, which that young lady feels, with mounting color, although she does not see it. Mr. Burleson having taken adieu of all, is about to drive off—

"Bug—but where is Bug?" asks John, coloring still higher at her companion's forgetfulness.

"Bless the child ! yes," says Mrs. General Likens, and hurries off in search of her.

"Dear me," says the General in the pause, "we liked to to have forgot !" and he hastens into the house and returns with a large newspaper bundle. "Bite for you on the road," he explains, proceeding to put it into the minister's buggy.

"Oh, thank you, General," John calls from her buggy ; "But Mrs. Likens has given it to us already—a great basket-full ! We have more than enough."

"You had better take it," says the General, his head a little on one side, as he holds it in his hand, and prophecy in his tones.

"Thank you, General ; no. We have enough—more than enough. No ; much obliged to you."

The General dislikes to contend ; hands the bundle to Isham, who has brought around the horses, and resumes his pipe.

"Chasing the guinea-hens in the back lot," Mrs. General Likens explains, appearing at this instant with Bug in a

soiled condition, covered head and body in an enormous sun-bonnet of the old lady's in lieu of her own, left behind in her hasty departure from home. Burleson has already driven off, Bug is assisted in, with a parting kiss from the General's wife, a hasty good-bye, and Wall drives off also.

Swiftly the travellers move along the road. Their horses have been well fed. Besides, Wall has an unconscious resolve to make Mike keep as near the party in advance as possible; while Burleson, who has the better horse, has a more conscious resolve that his friend shall be left as far behind as convenient. Bug entertains her companion. She tells him—incidentally—perhaps more of her “thitther Nan,” and other family matters, than is desirable. Not that Burleson had not anticipated this, but it was to him the lesser alternative of the two. Wall was tempted at first to sink as usual into brown study. From Mr. Merkes's example he is beginning to fear lest such study may become browner and browner, if indulged in, until it becomes black. By an effort he throws his thoughts entirely out of the buggy, and cultivates Bug. He tells her a fairy tale or two, holding her in at the catastrophe of each, lest she should tumble out with her emotion. As to keeping up with the other buggy, he soon finds that to do that with any degree of satisfactory nearness is hopeless. There is a good deal of deep sand to be gone through, and in the course of time he judges, by Bug's appetite if not by his own, that it must be noon or nearly, when he sees that the buggy in advance has stopped by a creek. Plum Creek? Yes; for there is Bobasheela tied off to one side, and there also stands his master.

“You drive a little on,” Mr. Long calls to him in turn as he drives nearer. “It might frighten your horse,” he explains, as Mr. Wall complies. It does not frighten either of the horses, but it does astonish Mr. Wall when he

looks back and sees that, Mr. Long having moved a little, a huge deer hangs suspended by its hind legs from a post-oak bough. "Yes, a tollable fine buck," Mr. Long remarks, when the gentlemen have tied their horses securely and joined him. "Yaas," Mr. Long further remarks, "I was up tollable early, not very, tied on a red handkerchief, and soon got him;" and Wall observes that Mr. Long's head is tied up in that article still, while his hat is fastened to the saddle of his horse. Of course none but a Seminarian can be ignorant of the motive of the hunter in this, and he, very properly, is ashamed to ask.

In fact, that clergyman is mainly occupied in endeavoring, furtively but eagerly, to gather from the countenances of Burleson and John what traces of their conversation may be visible thereon.

"I've had it flayed some time," says Mr. Long; "but I kept it hanging to get cool as possible. Won't take me five minutes to cut it up to fit in the buggy."

"I'm *tho* hungry," says Bug at this juncture.

"While Mr. Long finishes suppose we have dinner?" suggests John. It is cordially assented to by all. Burleson clears off a smooth spot on the grass beneath a tree, while Wall arranges the cushions from the buggies thereon, and John brings the basket—enough for a little army, one would judge, from the size and apparent weight of the same; and the appetite of all is sensibly increased as they seat themselves conveniently around with expectant eyes. Miss John unties the lid and draws out a roll of paper.

"Tongue!" conjectures Burleson.

"Poetry!" exclaims John, unrolling to view the foolscap manuscript.

"Tongue, but the wrong kind just now," says Burleson, after the explosion.

"Yes, it is so kind in her," says John. "She put it on

the top of our dinner. It will do for desert!" But her cheerfulness vanishes as she says it. Another package—a shorter one—of rhyme! Mrs. Likens always wrote blank verse on foolscap, rhyme on letter-paper: it was a peculiarity of genius. A dreadful suspicion seizes upon Wall. "Permit me!" he says, and empties the basket on the grass. Only manuscript, and plenty of it! There is a shout of laughter. Except Bug, however: she burst into weeping from the outset. In fact, in a moment or two the rest of the party feel strongly like joining her. But it is too ludicrous, and they again give way to merriment, loud and long continued.

"Never mind;" says John, at last. "Hush, Bug, dear; we will get Mr. Wall to make up to us for our dinner by reading a little of it." The proposition is scoffed at, and Bug's cries rise louder and louder. Mr. Long's heart is touched.

"Never you mind, little sis," he says. "Wait just a little bit; see if I don't have dinner for you."

Mr. Long lays aside his bloody knife, heaps a pile of dead leaves against a log, fires his rifle into the pile with the end among the leaves, and a flame rises upon the spot.

"Don't put on leaves, gentlemen, bark instead, if you please; it's coals we want, not blaze or smoke," he adds, as they bestir themselves to assist. Bug dries her tears at the sight, and in ten minutes the hunter supplies Bug first, and then the rest, with a slice of broiled venison.

"Needn't fear about the salt," he says; "I always keep it in a paper separate from my tobacco—'casionlly it *will* get mixed a little. Coffee too," he adds, putting a tin cup of water from the creek on to boil, and pouring part of the contents of a paper therein. "I never do without it when I can help. Better than whisky any day. Here's a paper of sugar too; milk *I* never use."

John recollects that half a loaf and some cakes have been left in a round box from last Saturday's road-side snack. The result is a hearty dinner at last for all. Mrs. Likens's poetry is gathered up and consigned to the basket for another time.

It takes but a little while for Mr. Long to salt the remainder of the venison well, wrap it up in the skin, and tie it on securely behind Mr. Wall's buggy with strips cut from the skin. A haunch is placed—somewhat against Mr. Burleson's protestations—under the seat of his vehicle in the place before occupied by Bug. Mr. Long then draws Wall a little to one side, and whispers :

“I've fastened on the antlers to your running gear under out of sight. You tell your uncle the meat's part pay for them Hebrew books. Hope he won't find it as tough as I've found *them*! You tell your uncle,” he continued, in a lower tone, “to nail up them antlers on to a tree or fence or something out of sight like about the yard. Tell him, when he sees them, to think of another proud animal—wild enough one at that—he knows who I mean—a-cavorting an' loping along to ruin, struck right down in his tracks. Only it was life not death *he* got! Ah, well, never mind; he'll know what I mean. Good-bye. I'll see you again. I've got a little plan in my head about those Meggar boys. Want you to help me. Haven't studied it out yet. At least may be so. Good-bye.” And, without further salutation, Brown Bob Long coils up his rope, hangs it upon the pommel of his old saddle, mounts, and is gone.

“We will change places now, Bug,” says John, as they are about to get into their respective vehicles to continue their journey.

“No, Miss John,” says Wall, the least smack in the world of sourness, of Mr. Merkes, in fact, in his tones, “it is

your kindness to me—I won't rob Mr. Burleson of the pleasure. Besides, Bug and I are just getting acquainted, and it is not far from town now."

Very good, Mr. Wall; but oftentimes very important things take place in a very brief space of time!

CHAPTER XIII.

A Family Council convened.

“**A** MOST manifest Providence!” exclaims Mr. Wall, the uncle, and the very moment he hears it read.

For his nephew has just had a letter from the great city of all that region inviting him to visit its greatest church with view to a settlement therein, “if the way be clear,” and this letter the nephew has brought direct from the post-office to his uncle’s study for his advice thereon. And here beginneth a lesson in human nature if we only had time to study it. This noble old clergyman would have shrunk from such a charge had it been pressed upon him in his early ministry—though actually filling two or three fully as important afterwards; yet he regards the modest reluctance of his nephew as commendable and—morbid. He doubted his own ability for such a position then, yet has not the least doubt on that point in reference to this nephew.

The solemn fact is, Eli tolerated things in his sons that he would have died rather than do in his own youth. Samuel bore his awful message to Eli, yet played the same foolish father over again in reference to his thoroughly worthless sons, every one of them. David, too, actually petted in Absalom what he would have deemed himself possessed of Saul’s evil spirit if he had even dreamed of doing in his own youth. So of Solomon in reference to Rehoboam, and of every father in reference to every son up to date; except, dear friend, *your* father.

It is astonishing. In his youthful days Mr. Wall senior would as soon have prayed for pestilence upon him as riches, for this he had not the faintest desire then; no, nor since. But for his nephew he does desire at least a handsome supply of the good things of this life; never thinks for a moment that riches might be as disastrous in their influence upon said nephew as he was positively certain they would be in his own case. He has reference in his present decision to the ample salary his nephew will receive if pastor of the city church as a reason he should accept, though with him it would have been a strong motive for declining. Perfectly willing to suffer himself the martyrdom of poverty forever, but very unwilling this nephew of his should have a joint racked or a hair singed.

Let the whole truth be told, and so he reasons and so he feels in another matter—Louisiana Mills! In his own fervently pious youth he would as soon have yearned for the hand of the Paphian Venus as for that of Louisiana, dull of mind and keen of appetite, utterly earthly and unspiritual in every sense—given to riches, and dress, and indolence. Yet all along, without a whisper of it to himself, much less to his own wife, he has set his heart upon his nephew being married to this lady of all the world. One of his first thoughts is that it will *now* be quite possible for this alliance to be consummated! Let us frankly acknowledge, and neither deny nor quarrel at, the eternal laws of the human heart. Noble, white-haired old Barzilai asked David nothing for himself whatever, but for Chimham every thing! That morning, weeks ago, when his nephew, after a night of sleepless thinking, had announced to his uncle his intention of mounting his horse and riding out in search of a field of labor farther out upon the frontier! Hard work the uncle had to dissuade him from his plan. He was weary even of the short period of compara-

tive idleness under his uncle's roof. After long years of training and arming he was ready, and yearned for the fight. Mr. Wall senior had sent him out to General Likens partly to keep him occupied until the something arrived, he hardly knew what. A dim something that the uncle expected confidently, and therefore prayed for fervently. That unknown something he found in the letter the instant he read it.

"Yes, Charles, your way is clear to visit this church," was his decision, all his noble face glowing with pride in his nephew, and cordial assurance of his future career, his eyes not unmoistened with emotion as he spoke. "I'll tell you," he continued; "we will call a family council upon the spot. See if all do not agree with me."

And so Mrs. Wall had to come in with her knitting, and Laura must be instantly sent for at the neighbor's with whose sick child she had been sitting up all night. John was deeply engaged, in a check apron and rolled-up sleeves, in some mystery of flour and eggs and sugar in the pantry, but come in she must. It was a critical point in the mystery, too; but whether it "fell" or "rose" or exploded was one to him—come in she must, on the spot.

"Do let the child stay, Mr. Wall," said the wife, as she accompanied her impetuous husband to his study in the yard.

"No, Mary," he says, in his loud, strong tones. "We can't do without John. I do believe she has got more clear, strong sense than any of us!"

He did not intend that young lady to hear this remark, but he did not care particularly if she did. He never said any thing which he would be unwilling for the world to hear. And John *did* hear him as she scraped the paste from her fingers in the pantry. She had a vague feeling of any thing rather than pleasure in regard to the subject

to be decided in the family council—an almost sickening feeling she could not account for. She regretted that she happened to be at home. But there was no help for it now. She would say as little as possible upon the matter, whatever it was. And so the family assembled in the little study. Mrs. Wall wished to stand. “It will take but a moment, I suppose. What is it?” she said.

“No, sit down, Mary,” the husband insisted.

“What is it, Charles?” inquired his aunt, seating herself on the edge of the lounge, and knitting for dear life.

“No, not till Laura comes,” says the husband, anxious for a full and solemn council—not a bit the less so because the decision of that council was already fully made up in his own mind. John looks over the books in the case, her sense of something unpleasant growing rapidly upon her.

At last Laura appears, and in a hurry.

“Dear me!” she says, at the door of the study. “What is it? Any one sick? Have the calves been in the garden last night? Don’t tell me any thing has been at my dahlias!”

Her father leads her in, shuts the door, requests attention, reads the letter, explains all the circumstances of the case. But long before he has come to a close, and to get the opinion of his council, he has given his own most decidedly that it is a very desirable position in every respect—that there can be no possible objection to Charles accepting the invitation.

“But let us have your opinion,” he says at last. “Mary, my dear, you first.”

“I can not see how it is possible to get Charles’s things ready in time,” says that lady, knitting thoughtfully as she runs over his wardrobe in her mind.

“Very well,” says her husband, cheerfully. “Now, Laura, your opinion. What is it?”

“Oh, of course,” she replies, and, “Oh, Charles, while I think of it, don’t forget to send me a good assortment of bulbous roots. Pack them in moss, and they can come by mail. You could find some cuttings, too, if you were to inquire in the city, only you are certain to forget it.”

“Very well,” says Mr. Wall, senior, still more cheerfully. “Now, John, what is your notion? Out with it, child!”

“Please excuse me this time, Mr. Wall. I know so little about such things—”

“No; speak out what you *do* know, child,” he says.

“I am sorry,” she says, hesitating a little. “You wish me to speak plainly. I don’t *know* any thing. I can only tell you what I *feel* about it. But I can’t tell you *why* I feel as I do. So what I would say is not worth hearing.”

“But what is it, John?” says Mr. Wall, not quite so cheerfully, while Charles listens as if to the voice of something rather within him than without him. “Tell us what you feel, child. We’ll let it go just for what it is worth.”

In the moment all the very much Mrs. General Likens had told her in reference to that part of Mr. Merkes’s experience flashed upon her.

“You know, child,” Mrs. General Likens had said, “he’s had an awful time of it a candidating; visiting churches an’ preachin’ before them, to let them see how they like him or don’t like him. In my opinion it’s as bad as standing a hand up on a block for sale. How they like his voice, an’ his gestures, an’ his manner of prayin’ an’ readin’; whether he’s too flowery for the old or too dry for the young, an’ all that. Of course he couldn’t do his best preachin’ under these circumstances—could you? An’ he imaginin’ all along he saw contempt in one face in the congregation, an’ laughin’ at some mistake he’d made in another. Him a meetin’ half a dozen other candidates on the spot, an’ all preachin’ against each other for dear life, per-

haps. An' the bein' heard, an' criticised, an' rejected; and that over an' over again. It's enough to kill his very heart like, cheapen him in his own esteem, cripple him for life. I know it's the custom in all the churches; that the best preachers in the land all do it; an' I don't know any way preachers are to be settled but that; yet I know one thing mighty well, an' that is, my James should have died first! It was my prayer from his birth he might be a preacher. If he had been, an' it had been the Lord's will, I would have given him up for a missionary to go to Siam-Pooter, or whatever it is, willingly; but not to go 'round with a pair of saddle-bags a-candidating! Too much study and too little exercise at the Seminary there in preparin' for the ministry, steady starvation after enterin' it, it is enough to sour Mr. Merkes. Araminty Allen can't make that allowance for him that I can, but when you come to add to all that, his trials and troubles candidating 'round among the churches, I don't blame him a bit if he is as cross and bitter an' gloomy an' cold as—between us—goodness knows he certainly is. What that man has gone through with would have ruined the temper of the Beloved Disciple, even if it is wicked to say so!"

But John whispers no syllable of all this.

"Well, Mr. Wall," says John, looking up with her clear, calm eyes and truthful brow, "I have a feeling that he ought not to go—at least, had better not settle there."

"But *why*, child?" asks Mr. Wall the elder, swiftly.

"My opinion is not worth much," she continues more firmly and seriously; "but I was in favor of his taking that school he once spoke of; and when that was abandoned, I was so anxious he should go on that missionary trip West, I suppose it prejudices me against this plan. You know, Mr. Wall," she says a little archly, "you did not call a council about those other plans."

While she is speaking one of the family is dimly conscious, as he looks upon her, of the stirring within him of a singular emotion, not entirely new in his bosom, but never so well defined as now—not perfectly defined as yet—far from it. “Singularly lovely,” he murmurs to himself; “but so different from Louisiana!”

“What a curious girl you are, John!” says the caller of the council; but he is aware also of a curious echo, too, to what she has said in his own bosom.

“I got it from you,” says John more boldly. “That day you were talking to Mr. Bowles in the parlor, you told him a young minister ought to spend several years in a comparatively obscure position before occupying a larger. You explained how he would thus get a practical knowledge of religion and men, which would make a substantial and lasting pastor of him afterwards. You told him it would be a good thing for him to spend a few years, even in teaching—it would deepen and enlarge his mind. That the eight or ten years you had spent in an obscure country charge before you took a city church was of great benefit to you. And then, I remember, you told him of promising young ministers who had gone from the Seminary into city pulpits who had failed to sustain themselves, and had to sink back at last into a lower position doubly bitter to them. And you mentioned two or three you knew who had ruined their health entirely in their effort to do so. Did not Mr. Merkes begin his career with a city pulpit?” asks John, in a lower voice.

“Yes,” says Mr. Wall the elder, not at all as cheerful as a few moments before; “I believe so. But, John, we hope Charles is neither a Mr. Bowles nor a Mr. Merkes,” he continued with a smile.

“May it not be because you see him with your loving eyes?” says John to herself. Yes, to a greater degree than

even John knew did the noble and affectionate uncle see every thing relating to those he loved through a wrong medium because a rosy medium. Of himself he had an humble opinion, whenever he thought of himself at all, which was rare enough. All his life his own wonderful success in his ministry had been to him a cause of unceasing astonishment—the more because his beginning was of the smallest and least promising in many respects. This astonishment was satisfied to him only by his unceasing remembrance that it *must* be—*was*—God himself, the Cause of it all! And so his amazement changed and increased and glowed more warmly into a thankfulness and confidence in Him which bore him up as upon wings.

“But he’s last man I know to find out from about other folks,” Mrs. General Likens remarked one day, speaking of him. “When it’s made his duty to speak out—that church trial we had out here, you remember, General—he says *every thing* plain, I tell you. Other times he talks easy enough about *things*, but he won’t about people. You never hear any half hints about folks, any chilly-like running down of other people, any sly questions about somebody which will oblige you to say something bad of them in reply from *his* lips. I’d jest as soon expect Apostle Paul to sit an’ babble an’ spit and gossip and whittle as *him* to do any thing small an’ mean. Something *awful* about that man—must be his pure goodness—like an angel. Only fault I know is he thinks too highly of other folks, specially those he’s most with. I suppose it is the shining of his hope an’ love on them colors them like to his eyes. One thing, it makes people on a strain to be what they know he thinks them to be—anywise, while they are anywhere about *him*.”

Mrs. General Likens was correct. Mr. Wall senior loved Charles as if he had been his own son. He estimates him

by the ample measure of his own heart, rather than by the smaller and colder and exacter measure of common sense. He really thinks more of him—is a thousand times more confident in the success of his nephew than he ever was of himself. And now John's unwilling opinion comes upon him, and upon the rest of the council, like a cool but entirely bracing and wholesome breeze. But, you see, John had a Yankee father—a man of clear, strong, straightforward, almost cold sense—Yankee that far. Well for her that her mother was the very soul of womanly sweetness and softness.

“Louisiana ! John !” rings the chime in the heart of Burleson. To have one girl in a man's mind is bother enough, but two at the same time, it is awful, as more than Captain Macheath have found out. And such a contrary two ! With Burleson it is the conflict in his choice as between moonlight and sunshine. Sunshine is coldly clear ; but oh ! the moonlight is so soft and intoxicating. Sunshine is too wakeful—a man must stand up on his feet and think and act strong and straight out under it ; but under the yellow glory of the moon it is so dreamy through all the golden night one can lie at length and drift like a bubble down the slow, eddying flow of whatever befalls. “I could be happy with Louisiana Mills, say, if I had never met with John,” he thinks ; “but I have met with her, and she is to me a something of priceless value—infinite—I can not compute it. I dare not give her up from my possession forever ! But here is this Louisiana, so artless and beautiful and charming to the eye. I wish to goodness she had run off with her father's overseer or something before I got back from college,” he says. “I would be at peace then to get up on my feet like a man, and brace myself somehow, and have purpose in life and do noble deeds, and perhaps get to heaven at last. Oh bother !”

One singular fact lay in this, that Burleson thought a vast deal the most of John in the mornings—made his calls upon her then, terribly to the derangement of her domestic duties sometimes. But, as John rose upon him with the morning sun, so she subsided in him with its setting. With the coming on of evening Louisiana rose, moon-like, above the horizon, in all her glory; it was after day was done that his calls upon her were made, save one, and that was a failure, perhaps for that very reason. It is the conflict between this sunshine and moonlight within him which makes such uneasy and uncertain twilight there. However, all this in a parenthesis.

And so all is tangle again in the council. It is hard to reason against stern Fact—eternal, undeniable Reason.

“But it is a plain Providence,” says Laura.

“Yes, but Providence sometimes opens a wide gate before us expressly that we may *not* enter it—to try us,” says the elder Mr. Wall thoughtfully. “I passed just one such when I entered the ministry; was glad ever after. And more than once.”

“And I,” thinks Mrs. Wall over her knitting, “when I came so very near marrying that rich, dissipated young St. Clair. Dear me, how long ago it was!”

“When Mr. Merkes made me that offer,” thinks Laura, but angry at herself for thinking of it as an opening of any kind at all.

In the buggy coming back from General Likens’s, thinks John to herself, and blushes, as if he had certainly read her thought, as she lifts her eyes and sees that the nephew is looking at her.

“I will tell you what I have determined,” says Charles Wall at last. “My mind is clear. I will go. But I will go to the city without the least hope, expectation, or desire to be called as pastor, or to accept the invitation if I am.

I want to see as much of all sorts of life as I well can before settling down to work. I have seen the Likens neighborhood a little; let me see city life a little too. I want to know, chiefly, a little more about myself. I haven't the faintest idea," he added, with a laugh, "of what I am, except that I have awful forebodings!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Quite another Neighborhood than General Likens's.

WHY is it that the young minister assumes from the very outset the relation he does to this Jacob Langdon? He is aware of it, he remonstrates with himself about it, he struggles manfully against it, but for the soul of him he can not help it! The quicksilver in the tube might as well resist the cold that sinks it towards zero. Unlike the mercury, he does not indicate it in any way, but none the less does he feel from the first that wretched sense of personal inferiority to Jacob Langdon. And why? in the name of logic and common-sense. Why? Jacob Langdon is a man who never got beyond a common-school education, and Wall is a thoroughly educated gentleman. Jacob Langdon is a moral man, perhaps, but Wall is much whiter from all stain than he. Jacob Langdon is a professor of religion, but he, in comparison to the young minister, has effected a standing, off the earth, only upon the first step leading into the temple, while the younger but more devoted Christian of the two has pressed his way long ago up those steps, and through the vestibule, and far on his way within the temple towards its Holy of Holies. The only two things in which Jacob Langdon is superior to him is practical knowledge of life, and—wealth; for it is Jacob Langdon of the well-known and immensely wealthy firm of Langdon, Burke, and Co.

If there be a rich man whose handsome carriage drives by your door so often, and you, a poor man, be on the

point of denying the fact of feeling inferior to said rich man, do not do it ! The feeling is wrong, but your denial of it, dear friend is worse. You are positively certain of the man's great inferiority to yourself in very many respects. But at last, in spite of yourself, especially if he be very rich and you be quite poor, you have the general sense of his being, upon the whole, your superior. If you be poet or artist or minister yourself, and young, that which exalts him most above you is your sense of his unlimited superiority to yourself in practical intellect. Whatever else you do know, banking, prices, stocks, commerce—in a word, the science of making money—is to you a vast knowledge, with the very alphabet of which you are unacquainted. In the art of spending money you feel yourself to be vastly before him—know infinitely better than he exactly what things to buy with his thousands, if you had them ; but as to accumulating those thousands you are a very babe at his feet.

It was with a singular sense of being quite small and very young that Charles Wall enters the counting-house of Langdon, Burke, and Co., in the city. Mr. Langdon being the officer of the city church who wrote the letter of invitation.

“Mr. Langdon has stepped out ; take a seat—the morning paper,” says the clerk on the high stool at the long mahogany desk behind the railing, hardly lifting his eyes from a heap of invoices before him.

“He knew by my letter that I would be in the city, and to see him about this hour, and yet he is out !” was the thought of Wall, as it would have been of Mr. Merkes in his place. Only Mr. Merkes would have nursed the thought with indignation, whereas Wall throttles and casts it out as soon as it is born. He seats himself with a “Thank you” on the black cushion of the nearest office-

chair, and takes the crisp morning paper that he may glance over the top of it around him.

It is a noble office, twenty by forty feet at least; the floor covered with cocoa-nut matting, the walls hung round with port-folios bearing in large letters upon their sides the names of all the leading ports of America and Europe. There are handsome paintings too of the celebrated clip-pers and steamships of the day. The three huge doors standing open upon the busy street; the library of journals and ledgers, each two feet long; the glimpse of several lengthy tables in an inner room covered with different samples of cotton in brown paper parcels; the vast iron house rather than safe in one corner; the stout negro porter, apron on, coming in and going out; the constant ingress of clerks with long, thin books in their breast-pockets, who hold brief and cabalistic conversation with the clerk, who never even nods to them in coming or recognizes their leaving, but writes steadily on through it all; every thing impresses the young minister with the fact that this office is quite a different place from his quiet apartment in the third story of the Seminary, so very high and dry above the bustling world. And he enjoys it wonderfully from the force of reaction, and has a deep respect for the clerk writing away at his desk. From the moment he had read the letter of invitation Hoppleton had dwindled into a much smaller place, and his uncle's home had seemed rather dull than not. The instant he had stepped, valise in hand, on the train, at the end of the stage part of his trip from Hoppleton, he had caught the contagion of enterprise and energy. He respected the conductor collecting tickets, had a lurking admiration for the dirty stoker, considered the engineer a hero, rather underrates himself, in fact, in comparison with all the pushing throng. In strong contrast with the eddy in which he has lain, there is a grandeur in

the torrent of practical life which exaggerates itself to him by the very contrast.

And now this tall, thin, hazel-eyed man who comes in with such a swift step must be Mr. Jacob Langdon. He is rather disappointed. He had imagined him portly, white-haired, and with an overflow of gold watch-chain over a white waistcoat—never mind. He rises to greet and be greeted, but Mr. Langdon regards him just at that instant no more than the spittoon at his feet.

“Say twenty thousand two fifty, and I’ll do it,” he says, as he comes rapidly in without looking over his shoulder at the weazen, little, dried-up old man who follows upon his footsteps like his shadow.

“Suppose you would! No. Twenty thousand five hundred,” replies that individual, in sharp, quick tones.

“Can’t do any thing with you, Ellis,” says Mr. Langdon, who has now reached the railed space, and, with hand thrust through the rails, is working the impatient fingers thereof under the nose of the clerk. “Check, Jones, twenty thousand five hundred!”

“Would endow a professor’s chair!” says Wall to himself, with a rising respect for both the gentlemen.

Mr. Ellis has the check, and without a word is gone. Mr. Langdon is hurrying out after him, when Mr. Wall rises and bows and catches his quick eye.

“Ah, yes!” says the broker, understanding immediately. “How are you? Pleasant weather!”

Mr. Wall shakes his extended hand.

“Cotton is it? or railway?” asks the broker, with a business smile.

“Something as interesting to you as either, I hope,” says the young minister, returning his smile, but feeling exceedingly uncertain whether his business will be really and truly as interesting to his new friend. Church and gospel

and preacher seem things so unreal and out of place in that busy spot.

“Very glad indeed to see you!” says the broker, becoming on the spot the church officer, when his visitor has explained who he is. And there is a Sabbath change in his tones as he learns of his visitor exactly when he arrived, at what hotel he stopped, how he left his uncle—still standing, however, and in a rapid manner.

“Now,” says the cotton-broker, at last, “it’s just twelve—we dine at four. Here are the papers, or look around the city a little. Only be here, if you please, say at twenty minutes to four, and I’ll show you the way out. Good-morning!” and he is gone into the maelstrom that circles past his front door.

Mr. Merkes would have been greatly aggrieved at so curt a disposal of himself. Wall is conscious of a rising tendency in him of that kind, but crushes it on the spot in a new admiration of the energetic business man. He has a strong disposition himself to plunge into the current of commerce; would like exceedingly some pressing call along the wharves and into the warehouses. After years of seclusion there is a romance, a fascination in the rapid footsteps, and quick speech, and talk of dollars, with a sense, too, of being himself quite an idler, altogether a child.

It is a compliment to Wall, however, that Mr. Jones, the clerk, comes at this juncture from inside his cage, introduces himself, and shakes hands. Mr. Jones has a quill of blue ink behind one ear, a quill of red ink behind the other, another of black ink in his mouth. He removes this from his lips to say:

“Very glad to make your acquaintance, sir. You look much younger than I expected to see. I knew your uncle well. Many a time have I heard—there’s the gun of the New York steamer coming in; hurry down, Peter—him

preach. I don't belong to the First Church myself. No; some of us went out of it a year or so ago to begin a little enterprise in one of the neglected districts. Sunday-school in the upper room of an engine-house, you know; preaching there at ten and at night. Take a seat, Captain Buff; ready to sail? Papers all right."

And Mr. Jones has to go into his den again to serve the last arrival. But Mr. Wall has had opportunity to observe that Mr. Jones is not only a clerk, but a gentleman.

He feels reassured, and with a word of adieu, which Mr. Jones had not the time to observe, he sallies forth into the tide without, until he finds himself near his hotel.

"Bill already settled, luggage carried off," says the clerk at the hotel bar in answer to an inquiry. "On an order from Jacob Langdon," is the explanation.

And so he guesses his way to the office of Langdon, Burke, and Co. again. Arrived there, he finds a somewhat shabby-looking gentleman standing at the desk in subdued conversation with Mr. Jones, who is writing steadily on none the less.

A moment or two after Mr. Langdon comes in with a rapid step, and an "Ah, Mr. Wall, how are you by this time?" In obedience, however, to a "Mr. Langdon, a moment, if you please!" from his clerk, Mr. Langdon retires with that clerk into the room with the long, unpainted cotton-tables. The clerk seems to have a good deal to say, and his principal only listens and nods. As they come out the clerk introduces his employer to the gentleman in somewhat shabby clothes, who looks thin and nervous. There is a rapid conversation between these last, of which the young minister only catches the words, "Wife and children—any thing on earth—great obligations—roll up my sleeves—any thing, sir, any thing?"

"Ah, well! at your service now, Mr. Wall. Suppose we

go," says Mr. Langdon at last, and they leave the office, the cotton-broker keeping up a fragmentary conversation with the shabby gentleman, who accompanies them. In course of time they arrive at the doorway of a huge warehouse-like establishment.

"Be so kind as to wait for me a moment," says the broker to his guest, and disappears with his other companion inside.

"Had to take you out of your way," says Mr. Langdon, emerging, as he hurries along with Mr. Wall. "Jones has always something of the sort on hand. You'd hardly believe it, that person who came with us was president of a railroad once—not so long ago either. Broken to pieces. Came out here to find business. Places? 'I am willing to do any thing,' he says, 'to feed my family: if it's only employment for a few days; it is better than none at all.' I had no place for him, so I brought him here. He'll have to work hard enough from dawn till dark. But he'll get his bread."

"Did you find any difficulty in securing him a place?" asks the young minister, as they hurry along, deeply interested.

"A great deal, only the head of that establishment couldn't refuse, under the circumstances. It is not three years ago *he* came to me in a worse fix than this man. I got him in there then. Of course, he is willing to help any other poor fellow."

"I must say, Mr. Langdon," says his companion, after a pause, "I envy you the opportunity you have of doing such a deed."

"Yes; it is more Jones than myself. People can do any thing with *him*, and he can do any thing he pleases with me. But here we are; walk in."

The young minister looks up and sees that they are in

front of a noble mansion with cast iron verandah for both stories, handsome plot in front with tessellated pavement leading from the gate, bordered with conch-shells and stone vases. The master of the house rang at the gate as he entered, and now the front door opens at his touch.

"Mistress in?" he inquires of the white-aproned colored man that opens the door.

"Just in, sir," is the reply.

"Dinner, then, soon as you please," says Mr. Langdon, showing his guest into the parlor and himself passing on up stairs to wash and tell his wife.

Dinner comes. It is all a dinner could be, and Mr. Wall partakes of it with a feeling of ease and enjoyment, as if he had been out on a camping excursion during the last few years, but had got home again. Mr. Merkes would have been estimating the cost, and blaming the extravagance, and adding another room to his overcrowded house from the proceeds of the superb caster before him. His prevailing feeling would have been, "There is an awful wrong somewhere, that you have all these things and I don't. Never mind. You must have a bitter sorrow somewhere. Perhaps you have a drunken son down town, or an idiot child up stairs, or something. Perhaps you'll break yet—it often happens." And so would Mr. Merkes console himself as he murmured steadily on—like a rivulet worried to death with perpetual pebbles in its path—against God.

Not so with Wall; he acknowledged to himself a keen enjoyment of the wealth of his host—but it is as if it is all his own. He feels entirely at home, and therefore seems so. He has a pleasant word for the children and a happy reply for his host, and, what a woman values more than diamonds or cashmeres, a deferential attention to every syllable of Mrs. Langdon. And he says very little himself at last, and is entirely at his ease.

“We will be glad if you will make out your list of hymns for to-morrow this afternoon,” says Mr. Langdon, as he shows his guest up stairs into his room.

In looking forward to the service the young minister expected to be quite nervous on that eventful Sabbath morning; he had even hoped that it would prove a rainy Sabbath. Yet he was only glad when he awoke the next morning and found the day up before him bright and glad. He had anticipated having all the mixed and miserable feelings of one about making his appearance in the pulpit as a candidate on exhibition, bothered to put on the best manner there. But even his fears of being nervous were all forgotten as he dressed and sat down at the window to his morning devotions. He is not there as a candidate for any thing whatever; merely there in Heaven’s Providence to preach, as he had been on his visit to Mr. Merkes. All he aims at is simply to preach. All he prays for is that he may do this to the profit of those that may hear, few or many. John’s opinion at the family council had been as a soft, cool hand laid upon a fevered brow. He felt quietly ready for the morning service even by breakfast. So much so that, with his sermon safely in his head and heart instead of his breast-pocket, he requested to accompany Mr. Langdon to the Sabbath-school. There was a simple nature in the young minister, a perfect ease of manner, that would have put Mr. Langdon out a little. “Going to preach in *our* pulpit, and so cool about it!” he would have thought, with some displeasure at his young guest, if that guest had not seemed so entirely yet quietly at home. Was it intellect and culture beginning to weigh its own against wealth? Or was it, rather, simple piety getting the mastery of circumstances, as it inherently will, though those circumstances towered at first like Alps against it? Not that he is in the least superior to any body else. Only he has,

somehow, become aware of all the much that is wrong in him, and has for the moment got his heel upon that worse self!

And the Sabbath-school prepared him to preach. He is beginning of late to find a deal of interest in the clear eyes of little children, a grace in the motion of their hands, and a wisdom in their prattle he never remarked before. His attention has been drawn towards them by what he has heard of Mr. Merkes's entire neglect of them, and his association with John has in some mysterious way ripened his heart towards the young as well as towards every thing else. They wish him to deliver an address to the children; but he pleasantly declines, and *talks* to the children instead, imparting to them all the profit and twenty times the pleasure during the ten minutes he holds their bright eyes in his than during the formal delivery of an hour's set address. And then their singing too! Sweeter music this world knows not of than the voices of children.

When he at last finds himself in the pulpit—itsself almost as large as Mr. Merkes's church—he is glad that he had selected for the occasion the sermon he had. Every minister prepares two sorts of sermons. One kind is of the genus commonly known as “a splendid discourse.” This is a sermon based on some striking text, filled with apt quotations from the poets, adorned with vivid illustrations, beautified with rhetorical curves and flourishes. The aim of such a sermon is to astonish the audience with some quaint interpretation of Scripture never before dreamed of by mortal man; or to thrill by its sublime flight; or to move and melt by its pathos; or to convince by its irresistible reasoning; or to delight by its very audacity. The object of this genus of sermon, in a word, is effect, immediate effect, and the success of the same is measured by the degree of its effect. To this end the sermon is rewrit-

ten with a polishing of the marble worthy of Isocrates, who spent thirty-six years of steady rewriting upon his one oration. It is such a venture, that no experienced minister launches himself from his pulpit cushion upon a splendid discourse unless he be very certain that the size of his congregation, the state of the weather, and his own exact measure of health and mood will warrant the attempt. Even then it is a risk. A bird flying in at the church window, a sudden shower or storm coming up, a dog yelping in the aisle, a child crying in a pew, will ruin the success of the most effective of this style of sermon.

Now Mr. Wall, too, had more than one splendid discourse among his sermons. They were the gems of his collection to him when he first arrived in Hoppleton. Somehow he had distrusted them since. And it is not a splendid discourse he now has determined to preach. It is one of the other genus of sermons, the faithful exposition of a text ; poetry, vivid illustration, rhetoric, novelty, sublimity, pathos, logic, audacity, all Corinthianism of the sort left out, or breaking their way in by sheer force, and the discourse depending upon its plain, direct meaning for its effect.

The sumptuous church holds a still more sumptuous congregation ; the organ peals in full tone : the choir have not one common-metre hymn to drag them down to the people in the pews below, and sing with free voices skyward. The young preacher preaches his sermon without let or hindrance, informing the hearers, to the best of his ability and with all his heart, of the meaning of God their Saviour in the text. A prayer, a hymn, the benediction, and this candidate for the vacant pulpit has settled his fate as far as that church is concerned forever.

CHAPTER XV.

Good Mr. Ramsey has his Views.

HOPPLETON remarks one day: "So that young Mr. Wall has got back from the city."

"Oh yes, of course!" poor Issells growls to his wife in comment thereon, as he disrobes himself for bed. "Common people like me must stay at home and slave. No visiting about among cities for them. Of course! Working their fingers to the bone, hardly making a miserable living at that. But preachers? Of course! They are the lords of the land, ten-dollar-a-yard broadcloth, travelling to cities, eat fine dinners, get tremendous salaries of thousands of dollars, and all. Religion? Yes, a blessed thing, as they call it, to them, no doubt! Of course!"

Fifty times a day come the words from Issells's mouth, "Of course!" Very much like poor Mr. Merkes, he has established it as the law of things that he is to be wronged, while all the rest of men are to be favored. If his iron burns him, his shears grow dull, a customer grumbles, a shutter creaks, his wife complains, his stove smokes, rule or chalk are not at hand when wanted, whatever wrong he endures, forever being wronged, it comes to his lips instantly, "Of course!" To injure him is the natural and invariable order of the universe! If lightning were to strike through his window, and harm him only to the extent of melting his lump of wax, he would have said, "Of course!" To be cruelly injured in some way all the time is Nature's first law in reference to *him*!

Almost before Mr. Ramsey knows that he is back from the city Charles is down at the old gentleman's shoe-store to see him. He has learned—an easy lesson—to love the good old man, to take deep sympathy in his labors for drunken Isham, the livery-stable keeper, and in his persistent assaults upon the unbelief, with the hardening of nigh two thousand years in it, of Josephs the Jew. And so he fairly glows with enthusiasm as he tells Mr. Ramsey his city experiences, the old gentleman as interested as he.

As to Edward Burleson, so intimate for years, they have, somehow, drifted apart of late—drifting farther apart every day. Their aims in life are so unlike. Rather, while Wall is entering with enthusiasm upon his profession, Burleson seems caught in an eddy of the current at the outset; not a particle of enthusiasm, sneering at all idea of it, circling passively round and round, as he himself languidly acknowledges it, a bubble, a straw—neither making, nor having the least intention, or even desire, to make any effort in any direction. Nor is it of any use to attempt arousing any ambition in him.

“Edward, I have set my heart upon your becoming a thoroughly competent lawyer,” his father had said to him one day in the bank. “I have large tracts of lands in the West. The titles to some of these are in a complicated condition—some of the lands are actually in litigation. Besides, the bank has continual matter outstanding needing the attention of a lawyer, and of a good lawyer at that. I can throw a large practice, too, from others into your hands. If you wish to gratify me you will go to work with a will.”

It was a great deal for the bank president to say. A man of few words, he meant every syllable of it. The relation between them was rather that between two gentlemen of the same standing in society than of father and

son. Any thing like tenderness of feeling—any manifestation of it, at least—was foreign to the nature of either. A good deal of cast iron and cold steel is essential to the constitution of a first-class business-man. And the father had grown, in conducting his affairs, sternly accurate in his very emotions. There is something in numerals, in the process of calculation, extremely frosty and petrifying to a man. The faculty of a college always give the first honor of a graduating class to the best mathematician. Very wisely ; he is the man, in most colleges, who delivers the Latin or Greek salutatory on Commencement-day ; he attains the first honor, but the process thereto freezes him from the very centre of his heart till his color has fled, his eyes become glassy, his lips blue—a dead language is the only one for *him* to express himself in. It is Mr. Burleson's piety which keeps his heart warm. He is deeply and sincerely, because understandingly, pious ; and it is just this piety, burning an unextinguished and inextinguishable fire at the centre of the man, which arrests and keeps back the process of congealment. Hence the importance he justly attaches to his accurate family worship, morning and night ; to his exact attendance on the Wednesday night prayer-meeting, which he prizes as a sort of Sabbath hour in the centre of the week ; to the Sabbath-day itself. These he prizes as the Arctic traveller does the seasons of food and fire by which alone life is maintained amidst the atmosphere and the ice-bergs of the pole, for their calculable, practical use. Now Edward has all the business faculty of his father, and more. He has actual talent. And he has naturally a larger heart, too, than his father. Who does not know that it is therein that the mainspring of a man is coiled ? And just in his *heart* is the defect, the lack, which ruins the whole man.

While his father speaks to him now, standing at his

desk, his back to his son, and pausing not a moment, apparently, from writing as he speaks, that son is sitting idly before the fire, smoking languidly, a newspaper upon his knee. A cigar his father abhorred as something altogether unbusiness-like. Edward Burleson smoked none the less—rather the more—on this account. Not that he was particularly fond of smoking. He smoked listlessly, just when it came to hand—has no settled thought or feeling even in regard to that. He would not even dislike Josiah Evers as he does if it required any exertion to do so. He now considers his father's remark very much as if Bug had made it instead.

“I never knew a lawyer in my life,” he replies at last, speaking as much to himself as to his father, “who was not a scoundrel. The better lawyer he is, so much the more desperate a villain. To sell one's intellect and reading to the highest bidder—one's power to make people laugh and to make people cry to the scamp that can pay most money for it! Dirty work! Humph! one's power of sarcasm, one's ability to quote the poets, for sale at so much! To keep one's conscience, too, on hire, as that drunken Isham down there at the livery-stable does a horse,—that any man, gentleman or blackleg, so he has the money, can mount and ride through dust or mire in whatever direction he pleases. Thank you, not if I can help it; at least not till I *must*!”

“You do not mean what you say. We will speak about it again,” is all the reply the elder Burleson, after quite a pause, makes to this, and writes steadily on, his son resuming as coolly cigar and newspaper.

And so it was when he conversed with his old college friend instead. Whatever was the topic, it was becoming the habit of his life to indulge only in disparagement, cavilling, contempt. “Although I don't care a cent how it

is, or, in fact, *what* it is," was his usual conclusion. And the young minister *did* care decidedly in regard to every thing—was full of plan and purpose—hopeful and active: would not have died for a great deal.

"You can never do me a greater kindness, one for which I will be more thankful, than to tell me of any defect I have as a minister or as a man," he said, being so young, to Burleson one night during a long conversation. "My heart is set upon succeeding in my profession. I am eager to know how to do so—what to correct. I'll tell you," he continued, warmly, to Burleson. "We'll make a bargain. Only tell me frankly every thing you see wrong in me—even in the least—and I will do the same for you. It will be like the wrestlers and boxers in the Olympian games: don't spare me, and I won't spare you; and so we will mutually develop each other into larger men."

"Many thinks—I believe not," replied Burleson, coldly. "I know my faults already a great deal better than you do. But then I have no intention of correcting them. Succeed? I don't want to succeed. Why should I?"

And so it was; the friends seemed changing their identity. The removal of Wall from the Seminary was as the bringing a plant out of a close room into the sunshine and the open air. He had risen into a newer and larger, a more genial and healthful life from the first. He had increased in stature and weight, in color and cheerfulness and energy. He was, under the influence of a powerful motive within, steadily assimilating himself and adapting himself to the living, breathing world in which lay his life's work. A very unfinished man yet was the Rev. Charles Wall, Junior.

We humbly entreat you, dear reader, do not regard Mr. Ramsey, to whom we return for a moment, as a bore. His species on earth are too few to be esteemed such—interest-

ing rarities rather. Besides, the angels hovering over him may have looked at each other occasionally with a smile at some of his ways; but that they are far more interested in just such than over many a king or queen, to say nothing of a blood-and-thunder hero roaring over the stage of life, I have no more doubt than I have of my own existence or of theirs.

"Ah! back again? Glad to see you!" says Mr. Ramsey to Charles, as he enters his store that afternoon. "How you have improved during your trip! If you go on you'll soon be your uncle over again. You had such a squinched-up look when you first came home I almost despaired of you."

"You must not say any thing against the Seminary, Mr. Ramsey," says Wall, radiant with health and high spirits. "It has been the training-school of thousands, who owe all they have done in the world, under God, to it. Suppose the students occasionally overstudy themselves there, get into monastic habits, have a touch of the dyspepsia—these are small evils to the immense advantages they derive. Even these they soon rub off in mingling afterwards with the world. And, besides, these objections to seminary life are being removed by new arrangements—gymnasiums and the like."

"I don't know," says old Mr. Ramsey, shaking his head as he leans with his back against the counter. "I am old-fashioned in my notions, I dare say; but the good old plan of having the candidates study under actual pastors, engaging actively in labor under them, such as visiting the sick, holding prayer-meetings around—things of that kind. With the exception of your uncle, if there's a minister of our denomination that isn't more or less an invalid, I don't know him. However, I won't insist. They are even getting to wear their beards now! Ah, well! It may be

right. But tell me something about the city and all you saw."

"I am letting *mine* grow," said Wall, coloring a little at the allusion to his bearded face, "to secure my throat from bronchitis. It is God that planted it, you know, Mr. Ramsey." In fact, any one of his old professors in the Seminary would have been obliged to bring down his spectacles from forehead to nose, and to have looked long and carefully through them even at that, to have recognized their thin, pale-faced, closely-shaven graduate in the bronzed, bearded, and—getting to be—burly youth who now stands full of life and ardor before Mr. Ramsey. "I thought you would like to hear about the city," says Wall, seating himself on the low sofa upon which customers sat to try on shoes, "and I came down as soon as I could get away from home. And now I hardly know where to begin."

"Well," says Mr. Ramsey, "how did you like the members of the church?"

"I hardly know how to answer," says his companion. "To see them—the men, I mean—in their offices and stores, along the wharves and streets, ordering their clerks and porters about, they seem to a stranger—the officers of the church and all—to be as worldly-minded, as shrewd in a trade, as eager and as earthly, as furious in the race for riches as any body. No time for religious talk, or even thought, among bales and boxes, hogsheads and drays, steamers coming in and going out. It had a depressing influence on me at first. How is it possible, I thought, for a man to keep the flame of religion alive in his heart amidst this deluge of worldliness? How can an Enoch, even, really walk with God, mingled so all the week in this crowd and crush and hurly-burly of men?"

"No, you are wrong!" said the elder Christian, gravely.

“Piety is not as weakly a thing as that. It isn’t a taper-flame liable to be puffed out by any chance breeze. It is a living principle—when it exists at all—ininitely stronger than any thing else. It is put by God in a man’s bosom a real thing, a hearty thing, a strong thing—a vast deal stronger than any thing else it meets along the streets or any where else! Provided a man is in his duty,” says Mr. Ramsey, with warmth, standing up from the counter as he speaks. “In the morning let him realize all the perils of the day before him, with hearty distrust of himself; let him then ask the Good Spirit to be in him in all His power all day; and then let him go along the path God has given him with a bold front and a firm foot, whether it leads through the thick of a crowd or of a battle. Watch and pray always, of course; but for a man to creep out of his house fearfully in the morning, and go timidly, as if walking on eggs, all day, slow and trembling, hardly daring to look around, or to open his mouth, or to lift his hand, or to raise his foot—what is it?” says Mr. Ramsey, warmly. “It isn’t distrust of himself so much as it’s distrust of God’s Spirit in a man to help him. A man can’t distrust himself too much, but he can’t trust God in him too much, so that he clings to God—sees that he does nothing to offend Him. I am an old man myself—a poor, feeble one—but I do like to see a manly piety, a healthful, fearless piety, going on its great errand like the sunshine everywhere—into ships and steamboats, grog-shops, gambling-houses, highways, hedges—everywhere after people. General Likens and I had a long talk over it once. Bob Long was there too, and gave us *his* views. Somehow preachers, some of the best Christians too, ain’t *manly* enough! Bob said: ‘Too womanish, creeping, fearful like! We ain’t ashamed of George Washington. Them Meggar boys are bold as brass for Andrew Jackson. If we were only as open and bold

everywhere for Christ now ! He's a living man, you know, our *real* President, now and forever !' I never thought of it so till then. We Christians live too much inside our own little circle, afraid almost to peep over our church-pale : we must go out more — go out — abroad — everywhere ! I don't care if it's up to the highest place among men ; if a heart beats there, there we must climb to carry that heart the Gospel. And I don't care if it is the deepest and dirtiest ditch in the world, down at the bottom, under the mud and filth, if there's a soul there to be saved, there's our business to be. I don't mean ministers, I mean laymen too—all of us !—People have a way of saying—I've even heard some of our preachers say it—that our particular denomination ain't adapted," Mr. Ramsey broke out again, after a few minutes' silence, with even vehemence, "to certain classes. This denomination, that, and the other, are best suited to the masses. We are adapted to the educated, the thinking. Just so far as our church is not adapted to any sinner, anywhere, our church is not a Gospel church. Go ye into all the world ! Preach the Gospel to *every* creature ! May our particular church perish"—

"——from off the earth !" the younger continued where the older Christian hesitated—"if it is *not* adapted, as well as any, to convert the world ! and it is adapted, most of all !" Mr. Wall adds with enthusiasm.

And faithfully did Mr. Ramsey practise what he preached. Did angels smile or did they weep to see the persistent way in which he argued, for instance, and plead and wept even, for and with Josephs, the Jew clothes-seller next door ? To the Hebrew it was less than the buzzing of a fly. Were it possible, Josephs would have unhesitatingly sold the Saviour over again ; not a fibre in him conscious of any sensation beyond that involved in selling his very inferior goods at his very superior prices. And Mr.

Ramsey knew it all, but clung to Josephs still. The Saviour was of Josephs's very race; he could not forget that.

Young Mr. Wall had often conversed with Mr. Ramsey. He well knew Mr. Ramsey's favorite theme; he had led the conversation expressly to draw him out. In fact, the new healthfulness and compass and energy of his religious ideas were owing only less to Mr. Ramsey, John, and the rest, on the one side, than to Mr. Merkes on the other.

Now here is a man, said Wall to himself, as he sat on the sofa, looking up at his friend, who is really nothing but a weakly, aged keeper of a little shoe-store in a village. But see how his religion elevates and expands and animates him! What a glorious religion it is which gives, even to the humblest, such powerful motives and lofty aims and sublime views! Even in this frail old man one can detect the folded wings and the infinite ardor of the future angel. And Burleson, naturally so far grander than he in body, intellect, heart, this moment, in comparison with him, wiggles a tadpole in a mud-pond an inch across!

But Mr. Ramsey gives his young friend no time for reverie; he wants to know more about the city.

"Only," he says, "never think there's any thing in business necessarily hostile, at least certainly ruinous, to a man's religion. You understand me: every thing in this world is dead set against that, of course. What I am trying to say is that the religion in a man may be, can be, must be, an overmatch for the whole world, our own wicked hearts, the evil one himself! Our wicked heart? the Spirit lives in it constantly to keep it down. Satan? 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot,' says Scripture. The world? 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world!' No," continued Mr. Ramsey, warmly. "In

these last days, when all the world is to be saved by Christian people, there's no earthly use for feeble, creeping, whimpering Christians, everlastingly limping along, talking about, thinking about, working after, praying about nothing else but their own miserable ailments, body and soul. That might do in old times. What is wanted now is large, strong men, forgetting themselves and working for God—Luthers, Knoxes, Wesleys, and the like !”

But good Mr. Ramsey is a little ashamed of having so engrossed the conversation. On every other theme he is as mute as a mouse. And he has no more to say except to draw out Charles in regard to the city.

It seems to me, that gentleman pauses long enough to say to himself, General Likens, even his wife too, Mr. Long, John—all sound upon much the same key. My uncle? Yes, therein lies the explanation.

And so Charles proceeds to tell of the teas he assisted to drink while in the city, of the dinners he was invited to, of the luxury and wealth and all that. And then he tells of the Parsonage. In passing that stately structure one day with Mr. Jacob Langdon that gentleman had, in a purely incidental way, proposed that they should look in a moment. By a singular coincidence, too, Mr. Langdon happened to have all the keys of the edifice in his pockets. So they ascended the steps of brown stone, entered the front-door into the hall paved with encaustic tiles, and furnished with a hat-stand which was itself a wonder of art. From thence they visited the basement, with its kitchen so admirably furnished, and servants' chambers considerably larger and finer than Wall's room in the Seminary. All the little arrangements, too, for wood and water and laundry, were kindly explained by Mr. Langdon. Then they must visit the neat brick stable. “Ah! yes, that is the pastor's carriage,” Mr. Langdon explains of an exceed-

ingly neat vehicle therein. "The horses are at the livery-stable while we have no pastor. Splendid animals they are, too, fine as fiddles, gentle as kittens." And so they pass into the back yard, with its latticed summer-house and child's swing and grounds well stocked with all shrubbery, among which wound gravel-walks. Thence into the house again. Dining-room handsomely furnished, side-board. "Plate in bank," Mr. Langdon explains; "china, you see," he adds, opening the door of the china-closet on one side. Yes; chairs, extension-table, carpet, paintings on the wall—all in keeping. Then up stairs into the second story. "Only bed-rooms," says Mr. Langdon, opening the door of each wide enough for his companion to see how noble and complete are all the furnishings thereof. "Linen-closet," explains the guide, touching the porcelain knob of that apartment in passing. "Bath-room. Now, Mr. Wall, you must look in here a moment. You see marble bath, faucets for hot water and cold; hooks for clothes; shelves for towels; mirror; stand for soaps, perfumes, and such things." And so they pass on.

"Ah, now, this may interest you," says Mr. Langdon, opening a door of a room off from the rest. "Hold on till I open the shutters; pastor's study and library, you see. Yes, several thousand dollars' worth of books there. That writing-table and chair—nice, isn't it?—was got up by the ladies. The inkstand is very costly—inlaid with gold: it's at somebody's house for safer keeping just now. Burke presented that; he picked it up somewhere on one of his trips to Europe. Fine painting that; handsome engravings there—some of Burke's gatherings abroad. The fact is, we ought not to leave these things here, only we hope to get a pastor before very long. It's hardly worth while going up to the attic," says Mr. Langdon, as he passes the stairway leading thereto, after leaving the pastor's

study. "It is only fitted up as a play-room for the children when the weather is bad—large enough for a dozen youngsters." And so they came down the ample stairs again. "Ah, the parlors!" says Mr. Langdon, as they reach the hall again. "Carpets are up now for safe-keeping—finest tapestry we could get; those mirrors we are afraid to move—too costly to risk breaking. Parlor organ, you see, and all the rest!"

Mr. Wall had been in many city parlors by this time; but these, even in their denuded condition, rather eclipsed any thing he had ever before seen, and he said so, having main reference to the size of the rooms, the mouldings of the ceiling, the fresco of the walls.

"Yes," said Mr. Langdon, standing in the centre of the wide doorway between the parlors, his hands clasped together beneath his coat-tail, "we take a pride in it, of course. This is a large city, and there are a good many of us to take part in it, some rather wealthy than not. Each wishes to contribute the tastiest mite to the general object. We are continually making some improvements. Our plan is to obtain as pastor a first-class man in every sense of the word—we will have no other; when we get such we consider that we can not show him too much respect and affection."

Although the young minister did not say so there and then, he certainly thought just this about it all: Poor Mr. Merkes is ruined by his experiences so extremely the reverse of all this. Only another sort of ruin all *this* will work to a man, unless he have, indeed, strong brain, stronger heart, strongest piety.

"And a fine, roomy church they have, I suppose?" asked Mr. Ramsey, at last.

Mr. Wall describes the church in full, its vast width, breadth, height from marble floor to panelled dome. He

tells of the pulpit and organ and gorgeous pews. He is enthusiastic on the way the building is perfectly ventilated and brilliantly lighted from above. "No portentous shadow of the minister thrown on the wall behind him," explains Mr. Wall; "every gesture exaggerated and caricatured thereupon for the amusement of the younger portion of the audience!" In fact, he rebuilds the church from foundation to steeple-top before Mr. Ramsey's eyes in a very substantial and vivid manner. There is no one alive but Mr. Ramsey with whom he would care to enter upon such a description. Besides, it has come on to rain since he entered the store. There are no customers coming in, and Mr. Ramsey is interested. A better listener the old gentleman is than Mr. Wall himself would have been, had the narration been made to him instead. The same thing told by us is so much more interesting than when narrated, you see, by any other. The elder Christian is gratified, but not satisfied so far—rather dissatisfied. Therefore the young minister proceeds to tell him of the large Sabbath-school, its circular seats, its maps, library, order, singing. Mr. Ramsey brightens up.

"But how about the week-night prayer-meeting?" he asks. Mr. Wall is compelled to say that it is not attended at all as could be expected.

"I feared so!" says Mr. Ramsey, with a sigh. "And how about the members going to the theatre and balls and the like?" he asks, and is compelled to shake his head even more sadly over the reply.

"And does not this rather contradict what you said in regard to the necessary influence of business in the city upon piety?" asks his companion.

"It is what Christians *might* be, *will* be, as we draw nearer the Millennium, I was speaking of," he explains. "Josiah Evers was in here the other day—pity he tries to

be a skeptic, on the same principle that he wears tight boots—to get me to make a pair of shoes he could wear; his boots had almost killed his feet—a size too small from the start. And he was speaking of the advance of the world in science, art, commerce, civilization,” says Mr. Ramsey. “And he was right,” Mr. Ramsey adds. “Men have more to do of the kind, grander business of the sort to occupy them every day. And what I think is this: Just when locomotives are most numerous and travel fastest; just when all sorts of manufactories are on the grandest scale; when crops of all kinds are most plentiful; when all kinds of labor-saving machinery are in fullest operation; when ships and steamships are swiftest and biggest; when printing-presses are turning out papers and books in most abundance—oh, you know what I mean,” says Mr. Ramsey, with a gesture—“when the business of the globe—worldly business, I mean now—is at its largest and most pressing, it is just then that the men in whose hands it will be, will be all *Christian* men too, as being the *largest* of all men—in their notions, I mean—bodies, too, I hope. In Millennial times men will be so Christian, their piety’ll be of so ingrained and strong a kind, they’ll be able with their left hand like to hold and manage all the vast worldly business of the day, while with the right they turn it all for God. I have the idea but can’t express it. Only don’t believe I know any thing,” he added hastily, “as to *when* the Millennium is to come and how. I’ve no patience for any such visionary notions. I’m only saying what piety will be then—ought to be now—what is its *nature* to be!”

“It is almost time for me to go,” says Wall, rising; “and I haven’t told you yet any thing about Mr. Jones there in the city, and his enterprise.”

“And what is that?” asks Mr. Ramsey, with instinctive

interest. So the young minister has to tell him at length of white-haired, ruddy-faced, indomitable Mr. Jones, Mr. Langdon's clerk. Of how he went out with a colony a year ago from the grand church ; of their Sabbath-school in the engine-house in the outer district of the city ; of the preaching therein morning and night on Sabbaths ; of their prayer-meeting and tract visitation. It is a long story, and Mr. Wall tells the whole of it with zest. Had he not been with Mr. Jones as much as possible while in the city ? Had he not managed to get off from the parent church often enough to attend Sabbath-school and prayer-meeting—in fact to preach for them once or twice ? Truth to say, it was to him by far the most interesting part of his visit to the city—Mr. Jones and the new enterprise. And Mr. Ramsey is more interested in this than in all Mr. Wall has told him yet—much more !

It is almost dark before he can get away from Mr. Ramsey. So dark that, as he passes Mr. Mack's cabinet-shop on his way home, he would never have recognized that gentleman, seated upon the door-step in his shirt-sleeves, notwithstanding the drizzle, if he had not made it the new rule of his life never to pass any one without recognizing and saluting that individual, if in the bounds of possibility. Mr. Merkes is his impulse in the direction that is away from that gentleman's example, when he now salutes Mr. Mack with a smile—stops, in fact, to shake hands, if it is only for a moment. Mr. Mack has done a good day's work—if his work would only stay together when he has finished it—but he is, if possible, rather fuller of fun than when he had, early in the morning, inquired of Issells, opposite, the exact hour at which he would prefer he should have a coffin ready for his—Issells's—immediate use. "Needn't trouble yourself to give me your measure," he had remarked to the gloomy man. "I know my own measure

to an inch, and it takes just one-ninth, you know, for you." Nor has Mr. Mack cooled himself in the drizzle to such a degree but a spark remains for Mr. Wall. He has the instinct of a monkey for fun, whoever and whatever turns up. He knows exactly where a joke will hit surest and penetrate deepest. He now fits his ready shaft to the string :

"And so Miss John and young Burleson are going to make a match of it, I am told, Mr. Wall !"

It strikes as unexpectedly and as deeply as Mr. Mack can possibly wish ! Far more so than he dreams !

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Charles Wall has a Providence not apparently quite so providential.

“MY idee is—a bear-fight,” said Mr. Long, boldly.
“A what !” exclaimed uncle and nephew, with astonishment. It was several days after the events last recorded, and Mr. Long is seated in Mr. Wall’s study there in Hoppleton, negotiating the removal of his nephew to the General Likens neighborhood. For the Rev. Mr. Merkes is going to leave the same. In fact, Mr. Merkes is always just arriving or just leaving. From long practice he has become as spherical to this as a ball. Just so long to like a new field ; just so long thereafter for the mutual dissatisfaction to bud ; just so many months for this to bloom into open estrangement ; just such a time after this for Mr. Merkes to leave for another repetition of the same process elsewhere in hearty disgust. Mr. Merkes regards with painful suspicion the case of any minister settled for a length of time in the same field. Varieties of fruit even in the garden of the Lord ; and if Mr. Wall, senior, were as the ripe cluster, you too might have been as sour as poor Mr. Merkes if you had endured the same experiences.

This settled, Mr. Long comes to another matter. “I’ve got used to it now,” he remarks, “just as I’ve got used to risin’ at four, to sleepin’ on a blanket, an’ the like. Soon as I’ve done supper in my cabin off there in the woods, the books have got to come as natural to me as to take a chaw of tobacco. Used to spend that time once another sort o’

way altogether till *that* became habit. And now *this* has become habit. No, Hebrew's tough enough. Hebrew is *very* tough, indeed!" said the backwoodsman, with painful emphasis; "but it's not a bit too tough for a man in my case. I need something I must take hard hold on with both my hands, you see, or I'm mighty apt not to touch it at all. In fact, I don't object, myself, to going at things regular rough and tough and tumble. It's what I've been used to all my life. But I never undertook a job tougher than that Hebrew," said Mr. Long, reflectively. "Never did! And I'll say this, too; it's tough *enough*. I've no hankerin' it should be tougher than it is."

"But do you not meet with opposition—I mean from your old associates?" asked the uncle, in the course of further conversation. "Excuse me. I refer to your old companions of the cross-roads and the race-course."

"An' the doggery, an' the gamblin' on a barrel-end," continued Mr. Long for him, frankly. "An' the like deviltry. I will just tell you exactly the principle I go on. It 'pears to me a plain one. It seems, as far as I can see, the only one. It's with them fellows as it is with wild animals. You can just keep clear of them if you want, stay far out of their stamping-ground, hold yourself aloof all the time. But I ain't a man of that sort. It might be safest, but it don't altogether suit me. Well, if I go among them it's like goin' among varmints, bears, panthers, an' the like. In among them there's one of two things to be did: either they've got to be after you, or you've got to be after them! I had to choose. And I did. I wouldn't talk to anybody but you about it, Parson. And I wouldn't say so much about myself even to you, only I've got a notion in my head—and I'm comin' to it. Something I want help to carry out makes me I must explain. Suppose I give away before those Meggar boys? You, sitting in

your study here, Parson, associating only with decent people, don't know nothin' at all about folks of that kind. I don't mind at all," said Mr. Long, deeply excited himself in his story, "how much they keep hollerin' to me — 'I say, Bob, give us a sarmint!' or 'Sing us a psalm or so, old fellow!' I can stand their cursing me for a hypocrite by the hour together. As to jumping on me all in a bunch, holdin' me, you see, while one poured whisky down my throat—plan was to make me drunk—well," continued the stalwart hunter, with a grim smile, "they tried that onst, only onst! I was sorry Bill Meggar got his rib broke; but I couldn't help it. No," continued the rude disciple, with deepest seriousness. "But to hear them blaspheme so, I *can't* stand! Things worse, Parson, than you or your nephew here ever imagined of any body except, perhaps, of devils. They saw that *hurt*. It did; and they went at it twenty times worse for that very reason. Question now was, fight or fly? Suppose I had turned tail, what then? Why this: the devil and all his imps after me, my own heart singin' out in me, 'You give it up, Bob; holler Enough!' Why, Parson," said Mr. Long, pushing up his huge hat from his heated forehead, "I'd have been run down quick enough. No, sir. 'Resist the devil an' he will flee from you;' but how? 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal'—bowie-knives, six-shooters, an' the like — 'but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds.' Very well, exactly! So, from the very start of my tryin' to lead a new life, I began on them, instead, with all my might, didn't even give them time to cap, much less pull trigger, before I was down on them myself!"

"I do not entirely understand," began Mr. Wall, the uncle, interest in every line of his genial face.

"No?" exclaimed Mr. Long, with some surprise. "Why,

I only look at things as they are. These chaps, the Meggar boys, an' the like, are awful sinners. The man of them that dies, as he now is, is a lost man in hell forever. Such people are mighty apt to die, an' sudden at that—a cut with a knife, a crack of a revolver, strychnine whisky, an' the like. But here's a Salvation ready an' waitin' for the man that'll have it. Repent an' believe! that's the amount of my preachin' to them. My own case is all the argument, anecdote, an' illustration I need. I says to the hardest cases among them, 'Look here, if God could convert *me*, it stands to reason he can convert you; if God was willing to lay His hand on such a case as *I* was, no danger but He's willing to convert you. You see, my religion is just this: a man can't be such a sinner, let him have done his level best, but Christ is a great enough Saviour to save him!' Going hunting with one of them chaps, or among a crowd of them, I keep at them, as occasion offers, Repent an' believe! Repent an' believe! after them hard all the time! Even if I can't do them any good, it keeps them from being after *me*—anticipates them, you mind."

"I trust you may persevere," said Mr. Wall, the uncle, after a pause. "But I must be frank with you, Mr. Long," he continued, after a still larger pause. "You can not imagine how anxious I am, how fearful all your Christian friends are—"

"Dreadin' every day to hear say I've given up every thing, gone back like a dog to his vomit," interrupted Mr. Long, with a frank smile upon his bronzed face. "Precisely. And if I do go back, one thing I know mighty well, I'll be fifty thousand times worse'n I've ever been yet. Yes, sir! One other thing I know, anyhow," continued the hunter, speaking very slowly and half to himself, "that is, all my help is in God. And I know one

other thing more, too. This, that I just intend to hang on to Him close, with both hands, as long as I live. That is, you know, if He'll only help me do it!"

The elder minister of the two had intended to add a little warning and exhortation; the tone and manner in which Mr. Long spoke altogether anticipated, however, and manifestly rendered this useless.

"But you spoke of my being able to assist you in something," said the young minister at last.

"About them Meggar boys," said Mr. Long. "Yes, I've been after them some time now. I ain't without my hopes even of *them*," added he, boldly, as if he expected to be derided for any such hope. "I've studied at it ridin' through the woods, I've turned it over an' over. I've got my idee, an' I think you can help me. Oh, it's no use tryin'; unless you took a yoke o' steers an' a log-chain to it you couldn't get one of them chaps to preachin'. No, but I've got a plan, too." And Mr. Long hesitated, pushed his copious wool hat up off his reflective organs, and began to pull the straggling ends of his whiskers into the corners of his mouth, biting nervously at what was left of them from his Greek and especially Hebrew studies, as he turned the matter reflectively over again in his mind.

"Well, and what is it?" said the young minister, after pausing a while by way of meeting his friend at half distance.

"My plan is—a bear-fight," said Mr. Long, boldly, but with anxious inquiry in his tones and eyes.

"A what?" exclaimed uncle and nephew in a breath.

"A bear-fight!" repeated Mr. Long. But with his reply came the sound of the front gate falling to. The fact is, the young minister had all the time given his eyes to Mr. Long but his ears to the gate, expecting this expression from it. A wretched habit it is, that of listening to your

visitor so attentively with your eyes while your thoughts are leagues away; it is hypocrisy, it is literally eye-service. And now the waited-for sound of the front gate dispelled even the mockery of attention the nephew was giving his visitor. To uncle and guest the sound only said *Bang!* hardly that. To the nephew it said, "I am gone!"

"You'll have to excuse me, Mr. Long," said that gentleman. "I have a little engagement. I will see you again," and, grasping his hat, he too is gone. Mr. Long's position commands a view, through the window, of the street running in front of the house. As his friend leaves so impulsively he sees a very handsomely-dressed lady pass along the sidewalk, the young minister beside her! For an instant the rude disciple experiences a pang of keen disappointment; she is very beautiful, and Mr. Wall is very much in love!

"Of course! Only human nature!" he remarks to the uncle. "Astonishin' how much human nature there is in the world. Young, too, and why not, I'd like to know?" And none the less the hunter gazes after the retreating forms a little ruefully, obtaining as he does so scanty refreshment from the ends of his tortured beard.

Let it suffice to say, just here, that the success of Mr. Long in the chase does not forsake him when a preacher for the General Likens neighborhood is the object thereof. There is a good deal of silent mortification in nephew, and especially in uncle, at not hearing from the city church. Mortification, which like all such bitter medicine, does good to these, each according to his own need; for it is with infinite exactness the Great Physician weighs out to us of His drugs.

Must we record the greeting the new minister receives when, some days after this, he arrives at General Likens's?

And, almost on his arrival, it is arranged that Mr. Long's idea of a bear-fight shall be carried out, and immediately. Escape from the perpetual mortification by plunge into *that*, is the swift and unconscious reasoning of the new pastor.

CHAPTER XVII.

We make acquaintance with the Meggars.

“AND this is Old Man Meggars, I do hope!” It is Mr. Wall who says it. Somewhat impatiently, too, for Mr. Wall is not twenty-four as yet, and has not, so far, had more than a blow or two of the discipline of suffering.

“So do I, most sincerely.”

It is Mike, Mr. Wall’s horse, who at least means this; for Mike is the most intelligent of animals—a bright bay in more senses of the word than one. There was a mutual understanding the most perfect between him and his master. With this exception: that his master should ride him, especially if he rode him at full speed, Mike could understand; but that said rider should seat himself in that wheeled trough he called his buggy, to be dragged along by him, this was at once the mystery and misery of Mike’s existence, often pausing between pulls at the fodder, after he had finished his corn, to consider it.

This morning Mike had thanked all the gods of his mythology that the rattling bother his soul abhorred was not lumbering at his heels. Little satisfaction, however, does Mike get from this at last. If Mr. Wall had only taken the cabin of Brown Bob Long in his way, horse and rider would have saved a whole morning of blundering through the woods in search of Old Man Meggar, painfully entangling themselves in whole skeins, so to speak, of dim forest threads, crossing and winding back upon and knotting themselves up in hopeless confusion. Mike begins at

last to have painful apprehensions as to the sobriety, sanity even, of his rider. So turned to the right, to the left, is he, so continually being whirled about in the perpetual circling of the paths supposed to lie under the dead leaves, that he can hardly distinguish in the end his stupid tail from his sagacious nose; is getting to fear he will lose even his own strong senses. As to his bewildered master, like every one of us when in the wrong, he rides on, perfectly sure he is right; perfectly sure, until his path suddenly coils up upon itself and expires beneath Mike's hoofs at a charcoal-pit or a heap of rails mauled and left years ago. And at last, when he rides along, perfectly satisfied that he is going wrong, he suddenly comes upon Old Man Meggars, hidden away among the undergrowth, as vermin should always be and sometimes are.

Mr. Wall never saw the place before, yet he knows it at a glance! A long, low, rickety, dirty cabin it is, with a tottering chimney of sticks and mud at each end. According to the architecture invariable in that Western region familiarly known as "Egypt," there is a passage-way through the middle, and along the whole front is a low shed, supported upon unbarked black-jack poles. The earth beneath as clean as the poultry roosting every night under the shed above upon the rafters will permit. The surrounding out-houses are of the same style only several degrees lower. As Mr. Wall rides slowly up, his heart sinking as he does so, he observes what an amazing number of gourds are hanging about the rail fence, the offspring of riotous vines, running up and over and along upon the miserable fence with a recklessness characteristic of the whole place. Dozens of gourds hang also suspended from the tops of long and leaning poles, each gourd the home of a family of martins, every member of which is perpetually darting into its abode to dart immediately out again, as from household

strife therein which it was impossible to stand. The road before the cabins has evidently been for years the gathering-place of cattle. Among the mire lies an old wagon, and parts of another cumber the rotting logs placed on end, one higher than the other, at the fence by which the yard is entered. Half a dozen old saddles stride the fence, left there since being taken off the horses from sheer laziness, and which will not be taken into the house by their owners until the last possible moment before night.

More closely than this Mr. Wall has no time to observe for the awful din of the dogs around him. His first distant approach to the place has been sentinelled by a vicious beast on three legs, and his quick, spiteful bark is speedily caught up by a dozen or so of dogs of all shapes, colors, sizes, rousing from under the cabins and in all corners of the yard, and pouring over and through the fence with a welcome in keeping with the place. Fiery-eyed, lean to a degree apparently inconsistent with existence; scarce a whole tail, ear, or eye among them; evidently used to incessant cursing and kicking, scalding-water and cow-hides—a dissolute gang of canine banditti, in strict conformity with their masters. Even amidst their din Mr. Wall can not but notice the Agamemnon of the host, a large dog torn and maimed, the only silent one there, who stands with his grizzled head through a hole in the fence, evidently weighing in his mind the character and purpose of the new-comer as with the dignity of a judge. Thunder was his name, if Mr. Wall only knew it. Twice the rider reins up with thought of turning back. But night is coming on; he will be hopelessly lost in the forest! and so he rides slowly up, circled in by the increasing profanity of the dogs, as a fresh recruit bounds every moment over the fence to their aid.

The rider sees, drawing nearer, that there is quite a group of men lounging in the passage of the cabins and under the

front shed. A rough-looking set they are ; and, to his dismay, he observes quite a group of them around a whisky-barrel standing on end, playing cards upon its red head, with oaths and exclamations. The screams of a tortured fiddle come from within the house. In fact there is a miasma of wickedness, and whisky, and wretchedness, upon the whole den. But there is nothing else to do but get off his horse, defying the curs yelling and snapping around him. It would have been bad enough had he come under the protection of Brown Bob Long. Mr. Wall never felt so hopelessly alone in his life. Fresh from a Theological Institution, in which he had been during these last four years or so systematically unfitted for intercourse with the men and women of ordinary life, he would as lief have undertaken a camp of Comanches !

But two or three of the men least occupied are looking at him at last. They arise and come out together in their dirty shirt-sleeves, pipe in mouth. They reach the fence, and lean upon it on their folded arms—rough, red-headed, blowzy, bearded, large-nosed men they are. It is not Mr. Wall they are interested in at all ; it is his horse. A man they can see any time, and attach very little value to when seen. A fine horse is quite another thing. So far as the rider can see they have not as yet observed that he has accompanied the horse. At last one of them remarks :

“Pretty fair!”

“See them shoulders, Jake !” says another.

“And the puttin’ together of them hind-legs, Bill!” adds a third.

The first gentleman becomes more interested as he gazes upon Mike. Then and afterwards Mr. Wall observes that this one of the household bears to the rest the same relation of rule that Thunder does among the dogs—for this is Doc. Meggar. There is rude weight, positive dig-

nity, about this man as he gets over the fence for a closer examination of the horse, followed by the other two.

"Very fair, indeed!" remarks this slow-spoken personage at last, after walking deliberately around Mike, pipe in hand, kicking the swarming dogs out of his way.

"Ever seed cleaner chest than that, Doc.?" inquires the one standing immediately in front of the admired horse.

"'Tain't every day you can skeer up a critter with such action, Doc.," the third puts it to the leader of them.

By this time Doc. Meggar has placed the stem of his cob pipe firmly between his teeth, while he takes a pull at Mike's tail. Jake is at the same instant testing the animal's eyes by "making a shy" at them with his ragged red handkerchief, and Mike would have been indeed stone blind not to have started from an article of the filth and odor of the one in question. Bill Meggar contents himself by measuring Mike with his hand and examining his teeth, both of which the horse earnestly resents.

"How much that critter cost you?" asks Doc. Meggar at last of the owner; and it is the first recognition by any one of them there of his existence.

"He was given to me by my uncle," replies that gentleman.

"Ketch *my* daddy, let alone uncle, givin' me sech an anemil," remarks Jake, with severe sarcasm, implying strong doubt of the statement.

"But what will you take, now? Not a serviceable hoss, mind; too flimsy across the l'ins. On'y a sort of fancy anemil; ain't a paint hoss nuther, say?" asks Bill, resuming his pipe.

"Thank you. I don't want to sell," is the reply.

"Of course *not*! What *you* want to do is to swap. I seed that in your eyes the minit you rode up. That's what *you* come for! Just you hold on a bit!"

And Jake disappears for five minutes, to return from the back premises with a sorrel horse only less in size than a barn, rather the frame of a barn, for every bone is distinctly visible. Mr. Meggar leads the steed close beside the other, and is scornful of Mike at the contrast. A long discourse upon the superiority of the yellow barn in question follows. On the part of the visitor there is outward pleasantness of manner and words, but inward sickness of soul, the experience is so new.

The rest of the men scent an attempted swap from the outset. There are Old Man Meggar himself and two friends with whom he has been gambling upon the barrel, who remind Mr. Wall of dirty and defaced cents, and who circulate there as Zed and Toad. Not even the greasy cards can stand against the attractions of a swap of horses, and these join the group. No one has the least concern as to who the visitor is. The entire interest is centred in Mike, and Mr. Wall has a new insight into Swift's tale of the Yahoos and their four-footed masters. Though, at last, Mr. Wall afterwards says to himself, the greatest Yahoo that ever lived on earth was just the Dean himself!

But this venerable head of the household, Old Man Meggar! A miserable, little, shivelled up old sinner; his scanty wisps of white hair in strings about a weazen face; a pair of small eyes, red and watery from some sixty years of steady intoxication. To his toothless mouth swearing seems the only language left, flowing uninterruptedly with a rivulet of tobacco-juice which trickles down his ragged white beard from either filthy corner thereof. To him, as to his host, Mr. Wall now makes his appeal.

"This is old Mr. Meggar, I believe?" he says, with an inclination toward that old reprobate. "I started on a little visit to you, got lost in the woods, have had no dinner, am as hungry as you please. If it is convenient, sir,

I would like a little something to eat. As to our horses, gentlemen, they can wait !”

Acting, every bit of it. He is sorry he came, but he is in for it now, as into battle. All the sour Mr. Merkes in him rises in revolt. But he casts out the Mr. Merkes in him as he would a devil. “Simple Christian manliness, my boy !” he whispers to himself, cowardly enough to glance eagerly as he does so up the road. Oh, if Bob Long would only come ! The visitor has appealed to that one of the virtues which is about the only one left to that household—hospitality. In such a frank and cordial way too !

“Certainly, sir, certainly !” said the old man, and he climbed feebly over the fence, followed by his guest, the rest remaining about the horses. “What could I hev been thinking of? I oughter hev—” And here a dirty negro woman emerged from a side-hovel in answer to his curses. “Where’s ole woman ? you cullud cuss !”

“Same place, Massa ! sa-a-ame place ! Down’t end ob garding ! ’Hind de butter-beans !”

“A-prayin’ away !” said the master, with unspeakable disgust. “You jest run down there, quicker’n a flash. Tell her there’s a man here at the house wants his dinner. You clip it. Take seat, sir. Ev’ry afternoon, year ’round, same way ! Hev a pipe, sir ? A-prayin’, rain or shine, ’hind them butter-beans !—Bill” (at the top of his voice to the men at the fence), “hev you an’ Jake left enny o’ that whisky ? Not a *single* drop ?” (In a lowered growl)—“Of course not. You’ll hev to wait a little, sir. Boy’s gone to cross-roads for more, and I’ll lamm him when he gets here ! A-prayin’ ! Ez if Almighty ever comes in rifle-shot o’ the place !” and the oaths and tobacco-juice and hospitable attentions to his guest flowed on, mingled with unspeakable contempt at the conduct of his wife, praying behind the butter-beans.

“And what might your name be, stranger?” he asks at last.

“Charles Wall,” replies the visitor, suddenly and stoutly, but with a terror down his very spine. He need not have feared. Old Man Meggar knows nothing of him or of any other of his class!

“And your name is Meggar,” he continued, in the same breath. “Meggar, Meggar; I don’t remember ever meeting with any of that name before.”

A few of the men have torn themselves from the horse, and are lounging about the speaker. His remark brings out from all an instant, unanimous, uproarious shout of laughter.

“Why, what is the joke?” Mr. Wall inquires, as soon as he can be heard. His simplicity in asking such a question provokes another and heartier peal.

“Well, you see,” said his host, wiping with his yellow sleeve his watery eyes, and leering upon his guest like a decrepit satyr—“you see, I’m the child of misfortin’. I didn’t happen to hev any father, ’cept my mother. Her name was Meg—Meg something or other; I don’t rightly mind what; don’t matter. I s’pose people that knew my mother, seein’ me a little shaver toddlin’ about, ’d say, ‘Hello, little Meggar!’ and it come that way. Can’t say who begun it. Anyhow, Meggar’s my name. No, you never heern tell of the name before, I suppose!”

And he led off again in a peal of that particularly filthy kind of laughter which indicates the nature of the joke starting it. Only hear that peculiar species of merriment—from within a dram-shop as you pass the door, for instance—and you can be positively certain of the kind of jest it follows.

As the conversation proceeded, foul with profanity and filthy allusion, two thoughts struggled together in the

mind of the visitor. The first and most natural was, "These people are fiends in the flesh, hopelessly lost already. I was a fool for coming on such an errand. Only let me get away once—that is all I ask!" Against this arose up another thought: "These people are kept in this world still by the One that made them. If He can endure them I certainly ought. 'Mighty to save!' Yes even such as these. Who knows but even by me? Anyhow, here He has led me—here I intend to do all I can!"

But a strong effort it required for Mr. Wall, fresh from the Institution alluded to, to be fully at home with any new acquaintance, least of all such as these. "Yes, down with the Mr. Merkes!" he whispered to himself. "Admirable practice!" and threw himself into Health, the Weather, the Crops. Then the floating News of the Day. Then his horse, his admirable qualities, and how he had made that one desperate attempt to escape for his life from the buggy.

He must have caught the infection of talk from Mrs. General Likens, with whom he boarded. As he warmed to his work, careful too not to overdo it, he brought about, at last, peals of laughter at some joke ventured. He was aiming to please, and who can say what Divine Power was not aiding him? Before governors, kings, councils, synagogues—before bullies and blackguards, for that matter—before whomsoever God places a man—"Take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for—" Ah yes! at least he succeeds.

"Tell you what, boys, that chap's horse is *some*; an' he ain't far behind his animal himself," is the strong remark of Jake when their guest is summoned from them.

By this time all gathered around him into the house to dinner.

"You jest go in an' sit up an' make yourself at home,

Mister. We all hed hed our dinner 'fore you come," is the invitation of Old Man Meggar.

And so, entering the low doorway into a dark room, the guest seats himself at a table spread there. After a bow to a motherly old lady at the other end, he drops his head for a moment upon his hand, from long habit. When he looks up again the old lady is gazing upon him in a state of astonishment. As Mr. Wall's eyes get used to the darkness, he observes that she is a comelier person by far than he would have hoped to have seen in such a home. The white hair smoothed back under the simple cap of white muslin; such patience and peace in her sorrowful face as more than makes up to him for the absence of brown Bob Long—an unhoped-for ally! As her guest receives the blue-ware cup of strong coffee from her hands he says to himself, "Yes, there is an inherent refinement in the sex which no degradation can utterly destroy." And he is utterly mistaken. There is nothing of the kind.

"And what might your name be?" asked the old lady over the tops of her spectacles, after seeing that he has helped himself to butter and hot corn-pone. The pork and greens he has had the sense to take, at least, on his plate, with no intention save of politeness; for a leading feature of the Institution from which he comes is systematically to weaken also the digestive functions. We all do homage to Brain and Heart there; but how heartily we despise and maltreat the base helot Stomach! Only a necessary nuisance, that!

"Wall, Madam, Charles Wall," is the reply to her question, which is asked only to make the visitor feel more at home.

"Wall? Did you say Wall?" she asks, eagerly, yet softly.

"Yes, ma'am, Wall."

"Not any kin to that Rev. Wall, lives in Hoppleton?"

"His only nephew, ma'am. Do you know him?"

"Why, bless the Lord!" exclaims the old woman, very softly still, bringing her hands, suddenly clasped together, down upon the coarse cloth before her. "Do I know *him*! Preacher Wall! Why, it was him led me to know the Lord! An' you are his nephew I've hearn Bob Long tell of. Bless the Lord!" And tears are trickling down the old lady's cheek as she again brings down her hands, clasped together, as by habit of unceasing prayer, on the table before her, but softly still, very softly.

"Yes, ma'am, and glad to know you," the visitor replies, with deep interest.

"An' come in, yes, just at the very moment I was prayin' the Lord down behind butter-beans. He answerin' my very prayer; yes, jest while I was prayin', and I hardly darsent believe, so foolish was I! Yes, an' ign'rant! bless the Lord!" more softly still, but with silent, copious tears.

"And you knew my uncle?" said her guest, at length.

"That blessed meetin' in the Likens neighborhood! Yes," replied the old woman, gently. "I can't tell how I ever come to get to go. Yes; but it's harder to tell how I ever come to get away from it again. Yes; 'twas there I found the Lord. Yes, I had lived in sin all up to that time! Religion! Yes, I knew as little about it as th' old man an' the boys do this hour. But the Lord, yes, he wouldn't refuse me. He act'ly *took* me, a-comin' to him! An' the Lord, he knows, I've tried hard to keep, yes, close to him ever since. I've got a Bible; keep it in that crack 'tween the logs there by the bed, from the old man an' the boys. An' you are *his* nephew? Bless the Lord!" very softly indeed.

"But here I am clean forgettin'!" exclaimed the old

lady, rising from her seat. "Take some more molasses in your coffee;" and she held the old pewter spoon brimming, from the blue saucer, with molasses over his cup. "Sweet enough? Take some more o' th' hot pone—sorry it ain't cracklin' bread. Yes, an' there's the butter. An' you don't love pork an' greens? Lemme see—yes!" with energy. And the old lady proceeded to an ancient weather-beaten trunk in the corner of the low, dark room; unlocked it, took out a glass jar.

"Plum-jelly, I found time to make last summer," she explained, as she placed it on the table, dusted the top with her check apron, opened it, and proceeded to help her guest liberally. Mr. Wall had his hand up to decline; but he had more sense, not to say piety, and accepted it with thanks. It might have been far, very far, sweeter than it was; but he ate it with relish—for her sake.

"Made to eat with venison, child—only we ha'an't any deer meat to-day. It's the best I've got to offer ye," said the old lady, as she resumed her seat. "And *how* did the Lord put it in your head to come? First one you are hes ever been under *this* roof!" she inquired.

"It is Mr. Long's idea, Madam," replied her guest, as he went on with his meal. "He agreed to go with your sons on a bear-hunt, and took the liberty to invite me."

"Unbeknown to the boys, yes," said the old lady, eagerly, with open eyes, and in a low voice. "But it was a resk! Yes. If th' old man had a-seen you a ridin' up, knowin' who you was, he would a-been mighty apt to have said, 'At him, boys!' an' in half no time ev'ry dog on the place would a-been over the fence an' at you in real earnest!"

The dogs alluded to are indulging in the luxury of a universal fight in the front yard while she speaks. Her guest can appreciate her remark.

"But never you fear—it was the Lord sent you. Yes. Bless the Lord!" softly and with deepest fervor.

"I have no doubt you often pray for your husband and sons?" asked her guest, becoming more interested, from his very position, in the men outside, whose laughing and swearing—some cleaning their guns, others gambling over the whisky-barrel—formed a running background, so to speak, to the conversation at the table within.

"Constant—constant—constant!" was the reply from the heart of the wife and the mother. "I'd got to keer precious little for th' old man an' the boys—worn-out like—feelin' pretty much what, I suppose, a cow has for her calves. Up to the time I found the Lord, you mind! Sence then! Yes, I keer ten thousing times more for 'em. Ef the Lord will onny convert one o' them—don't matter which—onny *one* o' them! Seems to me I don't do nothin' but pray for 'em—never out o' my mind—never out o' my lips. Pray for 'em! Yes; makin' bread, fixin' the clothes, lookin' after the black ones, pourin' out coffee for 'em—all the time. When they're startin' out, an' when they come home roarin' drunk; when they're blaspheming, and when they're sleepin'. Sleepin'? Yes; when them boys—great, big, grown men now—are sleepin' in the other room, I often an' often steals in an' kneels by bedside—sleepin' so peaceful minds me of when they was babes an' children. I like to be near 'em, touchin' 'em while I pray. *This* one Lord, I say, or *this* one—only *me* to pray for them, Lord! Oh, if it be possible! And behind the butter-beans, too! Seems to me the Lord *must* hear!"

The tears had ceased flowing; too much in earnest now for that; and speaking so low, too, her guest at her elbow could scarcely hear her.

"Do you not attempt to *do* any thing—speak to them—any thing of that kind?" asks the visitor, after a pause.

“Never, dear ! No, they’re too far gone for *that* ! On’y the Lord can do any thing with such as *them* ! Yes ; so I just put it all in His hands. But,” with some alarm, “ef you’re sure you’ve done dinner you’d better go out now ; they might wonner what we found to talk about so long !”

And so Mr. Wall puts on a stout heart and goes out again under the front shed somewhat as one would have stepped off into a cess-pool. Careful not to overdo his part, he makes himself as much at ease among them as he can—adapts himself to his company. It strikes him in the midst of his success that he would have made a good actor ; he feels flattered. Jesuit ? He half fears it !

Just then the dog on duty gives a shrill alarm, and the yard of dogs pours itself over the fence and open their flying artillery upon another arrival. As he rides up, this new visitor is so much rougher in his general appearance than even the rest that Mr. Wall’s heart sinks within him ; he has already as many savages on hand as he can manage. The Institution effectually abstracted him from paying attention to such trifles as, say, horses ; he was as unconscious of the animal a man bestrode as the Meggars of the man himself. Had he looked below the new arrival’s beard he would have recognized Bobasheela ; but he didn’t. The stranger draws up at the fence, and gives a “Halloo here !” loud enough to have informed a flourishing village of his approach.

“Light !” is the responsive yell from the patriarch of the household, who, lounging to the fence, leans his arm upon it, and enters, according to established usage, upon the topics of Health, Weather, Crops—the new-comer still seated in his saddle. The group under the shed take no interest in the arrival ; they have all seen Bobasheela before. In half an hour the stranger accompanies his host to

the cabin, heavily laden with hunting accoutrements—Thunder gravely bringing up the rear.

“Evenin’, Jake. How are you by this time, Doc.? Ribs got well, Bill? That you, Toad? As us’al, Zed?” are his easy salutations as he enters the shed.

“This hyer is Mr.—Mr.—what did you call your name, Mister?” says Doc. Meggar of Mr. Wall, essaying to introduce him.

“Oh, never mind; I’ve met him before,” says Mr. Long, who has observed Mike at the fence. But he gives Mr. Wall a grasp of the hand which brings tears of unaffected feeling—it is so tight—to his eyes.

One thing strikes Mr. Wall. From the moment of Bob Long’s arrival, all redouble, if that were possible, their profanity. The group about the barrel gamble twice as boisterously, slapping down the cards with fresh oaths and energy. Toad resumes his greasy fiddle and defies him. The lowest and vilest jigs succeed each other in desperate haste—aimed offensively at Mr. Long. Yet every body feels that it is all put on to hide a sense of fear of defeat. Immensely relieved the first-comer feels by the arrival of his rough ally; the more so as Mr. Long is evidently master of the menagerie—quietly but entirely so.

“Old coat,” meditates that person in reference to Mr. Wall—“mighty like one I’ve seen on General Likens. Worst pants he hes—torn at that. Rusty-lookin’ hat, an’ keeps it on in the house. General Likens’s old gun leanin by him against the wall. Come over without me, to be independent like. Ah yes, it’s a resk, but you’ll do!”

And Mr. Long tilts his chair also against the log-wall, and is quite comfortable. Yes, and his friend owes part of his success to the effect on him as well as others of the clothes he wears, and he knows it. Dress, as we all understand, has much to do with diplomacy.

“Know you’re sufferin’ for whisky, Bob! Boy’s gone for some—won’t keep you waitin’ long,” remarks Old Man Meggar, with a wink of his watery eye and a wagging of his wicked old head at the company assembled.

“Ain’t got room for you at the barrel just now, Bob! On’y hold your horses half a minute—let you in torectly! Never knew sech a fellar for cards, on’y you *will* cheat!” is the remark of Jake.

“That ain’t a circumstance; you’ll excuse me, Bob; it’s *too* good. I must tell it!” begins Bill.

“Hold your racket, Toad—him a brethering in the church, too! It’s wuth hearin’.” And Bill proceeds to tell, with oaths as to its strict truth, an appalling tale of very recent wickedness on the part of Bob Long.

While Mr. Wall sickens as if at sea, Mr. Long sits serene, entire master still. Bill strains his imagination, heaps filth on filth, oath on oath! Now one, then another, backing up each other by peals of laughter, they urge on the attempt at martyrdom. Yet, even to themselves, they are only a pack of curs yelping about a lion; Zed and Toad, even, feel that.

“Now, look here, boys,” says brown Bob Long at last, when the attack begins to slacken from exhaustion. But Toad begins a vigorous jig upon his detestable fiddle, at the martyr’s elbow.

“Hold up one minit, Toad,” and Mr. Long lays one broad, hairy hand upon that gentleman’s shoulder. Toad only applies himself to his fiddle that much the more vigorously, giving head, arms, legs, feet, as well as voice, to the work. The next moment Mr. Long has plucked the violin out of his hands, stepped out, and pitched it on top of the shed, and resumed his chair—all very quietly. “What is the use, boys?” he says. We all know we’ve got to stand our trial before Almighty before long, an’ af-

ter that, heaven or hell! It's fact, an' we all know it! What is the *use*?"

It is all in the tone and manner! Guarded by hands alert as those of a prize-fighter to ward off from him every touch, there is, even in these, a soul. You can strike a man a blow in the soul as well as in the stomach; at least, Bob Long has done it! Not a man there is quite the same man after it. It is a relief to them that supper is announced just at that instant.

After supper Toad manages to fish down his fiddle, with many a curse, from the shed. Cards and a discussion of the hunt to-morrow are resumed to its inspiring strains. Mr. Wall, on invitation, agrees to stay all night and attend the hunt. The boy does not return with the whisky, and is thoroughly cursed as if by men on a raft at sea perishing of thirst. By midnight the house is buried in sleep. Angels, curious of the result, hover over Mrs. Meggar pleading hard behind the butter-beans.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Hunt of the Bear, and of other Game besides.

“**B**REAKFAST!” says Bob Long, in the ear of our hero, and he wakes to find it broad day. He dresses rapidly. Washes out under the shed still more rapidly, as the tin pan has a hole in the bottom. Breakfast. Old Man Meggar remains bundled up in bed in a corner of the room in which they eat, only a small opening left through the bed-clothes as an outlet for his oaths. He is perishing for whisky! His sons also suffer; but being younger they can bear the privation better. The boy sent for whisky has not yet returned. As wondering curses fall on him therefor, Mr. Long looks peculiarly solemn. Mrs. Meggar pauses once in pouring out the coffee, glances at Mr. Long, and continues to pour with an inward, “Yes. Bless the Lord, I see!”

The jar of plum-jelly is on the table. Mrs. Meggar’s reasoning on that point has been brief but conclusive: “Well, *let* it all be eaten up this mornin’, so that *he* gets some more!” Very sour it is indeed! Its acidity sharpens Mr. Wall’s teeth as for battle, yet, under the circumstances, he makes a religion of eating it.

Out in the yard, after breakfast, he finds the canine lazaroni in a state of wildest excitement. What remains to them of tails is being violently wagged, and the howling—Thunder augustly silent—is awful. Not a dog there but has entirely forgotten the hope of breakfast which fed his soul during the night, in prospect of a hunt on hand.

When at last they ride off from the fence, the feast of a Montfaucon would not have held back for an instant from following the ignoblest cur there. An air of even gravity has settled down upon the men as they ride—they have entered on business now. Doc. Meggar, the eldest son and sententious gentleman of the family, is now profoundly silent, swearing inwardly only as he rides, a kind of dignity, even, in the man. By common consent, after they have got a mile or two from the house into the woods, all the rest fall behind to let him ride in front. Mr. Long has the aspect of going to battle. His soul also is troubled. "Sing'lar, I never thought of it onst," he says to Mr. Wall, riding close to him and speaking in a low tone.

"How in the world will we manage to find you afterwards? After we get into the thick of the bresh it'll be like lookin' for a needle in the biggest sort of a haystack. When we start, you keep as near me as you can. I'll ride as slow as I can, too. An' when you are left behind, don't be skeared too much. You listen for the dogs, an' ride for them. Ef you don't hear them, I can yell—a little. Ef it's too far for that, don't you be skeared, and try to hunt us up—don't get yourself deranged. Jest stay still where you happen to be, and keep firing your rifle every quarter or so. Climb a tree if night ketches you; and when mornin' comes agin, you jest keep a-firin'. Here's a hunk of bread, put it in your pocket, case you should need it!"

This was altogether a new view of the matter to the person in question. He was about to reply, but a huge grapevine dangling from a tree overhead at this moment separated them as they rode. In fact, riding together was now becoming impossible as the woods became thicker. Doc. Meggar, too, leading the van, sends back over his shoulder the Parthian arrow of a single oath. Silence is the law now. Mr. Wall notices that all the dogs have fallen into

a solid group, and trot along with one large black dog well in front of them. Thunder is *his* name, as our hero knows by this time from the perpetual mention made of him last night and before starting. No tail whatever has Thunder, only one eye is left him, accompanied by the merest fragment of a left ear. A long scar extends from ear to tail. As yet the young minister is unacquainted with his bark; if Thunder had ventured on that anywhere about the house, even if it had been at midnight, not a man in the same but would have sprung for his rifle. He now leads the van, bearing with him the profound respect of every animal there behind him, on foot or in saddle.

As they ride, our novice must needs entangle himself in the branches of a huge tree fallen to the ground. While toiling to force his way through, not unblessed of Toad and Zed, he catches a sudden vision of a brown animal running down the trunk of a tree. To bring his heavy gun to his shoulder and send the contents of one of its barrels after the animal is the work of an instant.

“He’s been hunted off of before, that horse, young as he is!” is the exclamation of Jake behind him, however, with increased admiration of the animal. Well he had been, or his rider would have been left at the shot, torn out of his saddle by the brush. Mike only quivers, as it is, with a sense of unpleasant warmth in the tips of his intelligent ears, now browned from the discharge. Thunder pauses a moment on three feet, while his associates break ranks and plunge amidst the brush in search of the wounded animal. No wild-cat there! It is a quarter of a mile away, unhurt. And so the dogs resume their trot behind their leader, now far in advance. The unsuccessful marksman disentangles himself from the brush, and reloads his gun. Mr. Long reins in his temper and his pony and waits for him, while the others ride on, disgusted, after the dogs.

For full an hour our hero winds his horse around the trees and through the dense thickets in call of Mr. Long, but silent. Suddenly he observes off to the left a kind of furrow among the fallen leaves, their under and damper sides being turned up.

"I say, Mr. Long, here a moment. Isn't this the path of a bear?" he calls, reining up. Mr. Long is sorely tempted to vexation. Out of courtesy he rides back to look.

"Hi! Thunder!" he yells, as his eye catches the bear-trail; "good for you, Mr. Wall!" he pauses to say, and calls again and again until the woods ring. Thunder is half a mile off to the right; but in a few minutes he is under their hoofs. Silent until his nose touches the trail, then he opens like the boom of a bell, and disappears along the trail, his nose to the ground. At the sound every dog in the forest opens also through the whole gamut, and soon are following in the wake of Thunder, while the hunters spur and yell after, Doc. Meggar silent but soon far in front. Alas for Mr. Long's good resolutions! At the first sound from Thunder the existence of his friend has passed utterly from his mind. With a yell to Bobasheela he dashes after through the thicket and is soon lost to sight.

Favoring Mike with a cry such as he has never before heard—at least from his present master, and digging both heels convulsively into his flanks, Mr. Wall speeds along behind. Mike catches the enthusiasm, and on they tear. It would never have done for the young clergyman to have ridden at any thing like this rate through the Institution grounds, or even through Hoppleton. Astonishing the degree to which circumstances alter cases! He has not gone a quarter of a mile, however, before he reins up with a jerk. In attempting to dash through a thicket his hat has been jerked from his head, his powder-horn and shot-pouch torn from around his neck, his double-barrelled gun lies, twitch-

ed from his grasp by a grape-vine, upon the ground twenty yards behind, the bridle half plucked off his horse, and broken at that. It is dreadful to stop an instant, for the cry of dogs and men is already far ahead, growing fainter every moment.

Only one course to pursue. The rider dismounts, mends his bridle, puts it on again and fastens his horse. He then mends the shoulder-strap of his powder-horn and pouches, takes off his outer coat, puts his pouches on again, his coat on over that, and buttons it up from neck to waist. He has lost a handful of silver. Never mind, no time to look for that. Future antiquarians coming upon it may wonder and theorize and publish as to how on earth the money ever got there. No time for that now! He then regains his hat and forces it down upon his head, so that if torn off again his head will accompany it. Next a stout switch is cut to assist his spurs. Then the girth of his saddle is drawn up a hole or two, the blanket first pulled well forward. Last, his gun is secured. Remounting, he addresses himself to his task with a sort of desperation. All sounds of dogs and men have now died entirely away. Was he wrong in breathing a swift prayer as he applies switch and spurs to his horse? Right or wrong, wise or foolish, it was a spontaneous act. Let us photograph the man or leave him alone.

He felt amazed at himself as he dashed along in the direction from which the sounds had last come. Ravines over which he would not have dreamed of leaping at any other time, dense thickets through which he would never in a saner moment have supposed it possible for a human being to pass, on and on through a kind of whirlwind of saplings and forest-trees, brambles and grape-vines, he rushed, his hat down over his eyes, his left hand holding his gun upon his shoulder, his right plying the switch.

Cabined up all his life, he now gave absolute rein to himself as well as to his horse, enjoying the excitement with all his soul. "And if a bear, say, or a buck *had* burst through the Institution ground, students, pale tutors, spectacted professors, every soul therein, would have abandoned, for the moment, Church and world too in the mad chase. Esau was born before Jacob!" So he reasons as he rides. If Mr. Wall indeed had a guardian angel, that angel used his wings to some purpose to keep in full charge of him as he dashes on reckless of himself. He has by far the best horse on the ground; he rides at least as headlong as any man there; craziest there of all for the time, he soon makes up for his delay, comes in hearing of the dogs and men again. He observes that the hunters have been left far to the right, while the dogs are off to the other side. An idea strikes him and he turns sharply to the left, for the animal, whatever it is, is evidently making a circuit in that direction. In a few minutes' hard riding he finds that the dogs are ahead of him, while the men are shouting on his trail far behind. To be at last the foremost one in the race! The thought inspires him. He uses switch and spurs with double energy. He has ceased to shout. He finds it is only exhausting him without accomplishing any object. And so he rides silently on. He is evidently coming nearer and nearer upon the dogs.

Suddenly he turns off still more to the left from their cry. Before he knows it he comes upon the object of pursuit—a black bear! It seems immensely large as it shambls along; seems to be going very slow too, considering the eagerness of his friends behind. But the excitement on seeing it! The rider has for a moment forsaken his profession as a minister. He has abandoned his very senses. He yells at his horse, he halloos for the dogs, he screams to Mr. Long. In his frenzy he takes out his penknife, and

opens it savagely, with the purpose of jumping off his horse, rushing in upon the monster and slaughtering him upon the spot. Then it flashes upon him to ride his horse upon the animal and beat him over the head with one of the stirrup-irons, which he insanely unbuckles, as he rides, from the saddle for that purpose. Mike is as excited as his rider, he gets within ten steps of the bear, but declines going nearer. In vain the spurs and switch and yells of his rider. If that rider has lost his wits, Mike hasn't his. So the insane sportsman hurls his stirrup, leather and all, at the bear, trundling so leisurely along, a black mass of wool and fat.

Suddenly he remembers his gun. Leaping from his horse, he runs almost upon the bear, levels his weapon, with hands shaking with excitement, full upon it, cocks one barrel, and pulls desperately away at the trigger of the other. The instant he had left his horse Mike entered upon the sport on his own account, and gallops furiously along in the direction of the hunt. The bear goes crushing through the thicket, the dogs now well upon him, Thunder in advance. The dismounted Nimrod can hear the faint cries of the rest of the party far behind. He dashes on after the bear on foot. See! It has turned to bay. He comes full upon it, seated upright, with its back against a tree, wiping at the dogs swarming upon it, right and left, with its huge paws, its red mouth open and foaming. The last particle of sense forsakes the young fool. He advances directly upon the animal, levels his short, heavy gun full at its breast, a small white spot furnishing the mark, cocks both hammers, pulls both triggers, and finds himself at the discharge lying flat upon his back. He has a general impression that the bear will be upon him in an instant, and he scrambles, quivering and shaking with excitement, upon his feet. He need not fear! There had been powder and buck-shot in his rifle

sufficient for quite a long campaign of shooting. He was so near, too! There it lies upon the ground, the great unwieldy mass of wool, dead, the dogs yelling and biting at it in a whirlwind of excitement.

The hunter can not believe his eyes. That he—*he* should actually have killed the bear! He drives off the dogs with difficulty with his empty gun, and seats himself exhausted upon his prey—and a most luxuriant cushion it is—never king happier on his throne!

It occurs to him, panting with exertion, to see if his pockets have not been emptied in his fall, and he takes therefrom knife, pocket Testament, and all. The shouts of the men are coming nearer and nearer. The dogs have fallen exhausted around—these, too, panting for dear life. Two of them are apparently dying—one lies dead from the fight. Thunder is reposing at a little distance looking gravely, not so much at the bear as at the individual seated upon him, ceasing now and then to pant as if he had been struck by some new idea about it. At last he rises with the utmost dignity, approaches the young minister, smells him carefully, elaborately all around, and from head to foot, and resumes his lying down and panting. Not having a tail, it is impossible for him to express the result of his investigation. It is highly flattering to his new acquaintance, but he keeps it gravely to himself.

The cries of the rest of the party draw nearer and nearer. It may be it was from fatigue, but it may be it was from affectation; at any rate our hero keeps his seat upon the bear. Here comes the foremost of the party behind—Doc. Meggar! The blood is streaming down his face from a gash laid open in his cheek by the branch of a tree. He dashes up, jumps from his sweating horse, stands a moment in stupefied astonishment, and then, most emphatically,

"Look here," he says at last. "I say, you, stranger, give us your hand!" very gravely too.

Mr. Wall cordially complies; it is shaken long and vigorously, even solemnly, by Doc., who then falls on the ground and proceeds to drink ravenously from a little pool of green water in which the bear is half lying. There is more mud than water, and as much blood as either, in the pool. It strikes the stranger that Doc. drinks as much for the blood as for the water. He swallows down his exclamation, however, and receives with a vast deal more coolness and indifference of manner than of heart the rest of the Meggars who now pour in, tattered from the brush, excited, wondering, and awfully profane. Mr. Wall feels called upon to apologize.

"It is all a mere accident, gentlemen," he says, rising and standing off to one side. "I happened to have a tolerably good horse; and then I happened to be so I could head the bear. It is the first time I ever was on a hunt."

The Meggars have nothing to say at the moment, being busy fastening their horses and getting their knives ready for work on the bear. They have a unanimous and decided opinion on the point; and Zed and Toad know exactly what that opinion is. Not in vain have these eat at the table of the Meggars, slept on the floor of their cabin, had "chaws" from their bars of tobacco, drinks from their whisky-jugs, the use of their greasy decks of cards for so long. Had the Meggars entertained even the least hostile feeling towards the successful hunter, Zed and Toad would have proceeded in advance to curse him for them on the spot; held themselves ready to do any thing besides which their relation to the Meggars demanded. In fact, what Thunder was to the dogs at home, so are these battered, dilapidated, unutterably degraded specimens of the race to the Meggar boys. It is amazing the swarm of just

such lice as these this Meggar family are infested by ! And then those who dreaded as death to offend them ! They were kings—the Meggars—of the whole section ! Of course, they drew their followers towards all evil with vastly more ease than if they were working in the opposite direction. Yet Bob Long knew exactly what he undertook ; and it was worth the effort. Bob's attempt on them was an effort, in fact, for the whole section through them—an axe struck at the very root of the Banian wickedness of the entire region—a Napoleonic charge upon the very centre of the forces of the devil there. “ May talk of accident,” says Zed for his patrons ; “ but it's only to fus-class folks sech accidents happen. Never happen to *me* !” Zed, as being the last of the alphabet. “ Head-in' ?” yelps the other jackal. “ An' a good horse ? But it takes a clipper of a chap to make the dash you did, stranger, through these here woods. Wish had a drink of whisky to offer ye !”

The unaccountable failure of the boy to appear with the whisky the night before, and the consequent absence of that essential beverage during the hunt, had been a grief that had accompanied the Meggars and their hangers-on, from the instant they left their suffering parent, through brush and brier, up to the present instant. Mr. Long's reasoning, from long observation and experience, had been that the excitement of the whisky, together with that of the hunt, might be a little too much even for him to manage. By a bold stroke he had cut off the supply of whisky—only the excitement of a slain bear remained.

And this was of a wolfish nature. Hardly had the jackals agreed in their eulogy upon Mr. Wall than they fell into a sudden disagreement in regard to the inches of fat on the bear. Before the young hunter knew a quarrel was brewing, Zed and Toad were rolling over and over upon

the bloody ground, their hands twisted in each other's hair, pounding, kicking, cursing each other. It excited not a particle of interest in the others, who were now at work upon Bruin, divesting that stray Russian of his furry robe.

"Thank you, no, believe not!" had been the reply to Mr. Wall's offer to lend an assisting hand. Had it been a slaughtered hog instead, he would have shrunk from the task with loathing. But a bear—of his own shooting, too! He had a craving to dabble in its blood—to rend it to atoms! Yes, and if the oldest of his venerable professors from the Seminary could have been placed on horseback, and borne through the hunt, *he* would have had the same eager, savage feeling. Witness the keen satisfaction with which they would hunt down an errorist and slaughter him before the class! If the disposition to hunt *something* were not one essential to keeping down all sorts of vermin, it would never have been kindled, as it is, in every bosom!

The party had been at work on the bear half an hour when a faint yell came upon their ears from the far depths of the forest. No one regarded it at all—hard at work with bloody knives, carving and chopping.

"Bob Long!" said one of them, incidentally, after the fifth yell from the distance.

"Get out o' the way!" said Doc. Meggar, at last, pushing Zed aside from the bear. "You ain't good for any thin' else; give Bob Long a yelp or so!"

Zed rose, placed a bloody hand on each side of his mouth, inflated his chest, and gave a yell that brought every dog except Thunder to his feet. But it was still many minutes before they were required to turn from the bear to assault Mr. Long approaching the spot.

"Tol'able, tol'able," said he, standing over the heap of bloody meat. "How many inches on the ribs?"

"Three!" exclaimed Zed, with a scowl at Toad.

"You lie!—five!" shouted Toad, and thereupon Zed pitched head foremost upon him across the streaming pile, and the couple rolled and pounded, and kicked and crushed as before, attracting no attention even from the dogs.

"But look here—no use o' askin', I suppose—seen any thin' of that Mr. Wall?" said Mr. Long; for that gentleman had strayed off, partly in search of his lost stirrup, and largely to get away for a while from the hideous swearing.

"Seen who?" asked Bill Meggar, with profound indifference.

"You mean that chap started with us this mornin'?" inquired Jake. "Yes; I seen him last fall, fiddle in one hand, jug of whisky in the other, floatin' on a raft down the O-hi-o!"

"I *knew* he'd get lost!" remarked Mr. Long to himself. "Take about three days to hunt him up. Well, ha'n't got any thing better to do!"

"Hold on a minute," remarked Doc., who was down on his knees on the outspread skin recently worn by the hermit of the woods, smoothing and folding it for carrying. "You mind the hand Daddy was onst in a hunt—tol'able, hay?" he asked.

Mr. Long leaned upon his rifle and nodded his head.

"I have done a little somethin' of the kind in *my* day," continued Doc., ceasing his labors and sitting with crossed legs on the mire of blood and dirt and locks of wool under him. "Mind that time, Bob, I had with that panter? Time I tuk the old lady's pups, an' had her after me; five claws in each of her four hands; mouth full o' teeth?"

Mr. Long remembered perfectly.

"When I come tearin' up this mornin', I 'head of the rest, cheek cut open, after miles of the tallest ridin' through the thickest bresh," said Doc., "when I rode up an' seed

that chap a-settin' on the bar, comfortable as if had been settin' there more'n a year; as cool an' quiet! I says to myself, 'You are beat *this* time, anyhow, old feller; you just acknowledge the corn—hand over your hat!'

"Seen who?" asked Mr. Long, in the dark.

"Who'm I *talkin'* about?" exclaims Doc., exceedingly irritated and with a volley of oaths.

At this point Zed and Toad break in with a full and highly-colored description of the killing of the bear.

"An' look at Thunder!" said Zed, as Mr. Wall came up leading his horse, with said dog at his heels. "A feller can't get that dog so much as to look at him as a gineral thing—won't even smell a bone if Toad or Zed gives it to him; an' ever sence this bar was killed he's stuck to this stranger close, lyin' down at his feet, sticking to him, like you see a pup do, whenever he moves. Thunder knows!" continued Zed, with abundant blasphemy by way of confirmation. "*He* knows, that dog does!"

As Mr. Wall approached, Mr. Long pushed back his hat—considerably damaged in its transit through the brush—from over his eyes, and looked steadily at him, as if it had been several years since they had last met.

"That there is a horse," remarked Bill, for the information of his friends in natural history, as Mr. Wall led his animal up to receive his share of the load of bear-meat. "A horse," he repeated, as he walked slowly round and round him, looking lovingly and longingly at his various points with more than the enthusiasm of a connoisseur at a fine painting. "A horse," he murmured to himself. "Yes, this 'ere is a *horse*—an an-e-mil!"

A few moments after saw the whole party off for the camping-spot. Being too late in the day to return to the house, there was nothing to do but spend the night at the nearest water. Very much more than their portion of the

load of meat was assigned to Zed and Toad, fastened about their saddles with maledictions and buckskin thongs. Upon these gentlemen the reaction from excitement and the long and exhausting deficit of whisky was beginning to tell woefully, and they brought up the rear of the caravan in a dilapidated and dejected manner, hardly energy enough to curse along the wretched ponies which they bestrode.

“An’ so you’ve got yourself killed, Buck?” Bill had said before mounting, turning the dead dog over with his foot. “Well, old fellow, you’ve did your duty, any way!”

As to the wounded dogs, they were left to hobble after if their broken bones would allow, or to die on the field of victory, as they saw best.

It was not until the arrival of the party at the camping-spot that Mr. Wall learned this fact. Beckoning Mr. Long aside and begging him to accompany him, he rode directly back on the path they had come. Sure enough, the two dogs had dragged themselves along after their masters as far as they could, and lay whimpering in the path. A rapid examination by Mr. Long satisfied him that one of the dogs was hopelessly injured, every rib broken.

“Shoot him,” said his companion, in more the language of command than he had used before killing the bear. Mr. Long complied, and the miseries of the animal were over. Only one leg of the other dog was broken. Relieving each other by turns, the wounded animal was carried, licking the hands that held him, upon the pommel of their saddles into camp.

“Well,” exclaimed Zed, as the dog was gently placed on the ground before the huge fire, “ef you ha’n’t act’ly brung that dog in—a *dog*! An’ goin’ to splinter his cussed leg too—a *dog*!”

“It’s more’n Doc., or Bill, or Jake here would ’a done for

me ef *my* leg had got broke in a bear-fight," with oaths of affirmation, remarked Toad—and, no one can doubt, he was not far wrong.

By this time night had settled upon the camp. The blaze of its fire threw long shadows from the trees around. The mournful cry of the whip-poor-will, the persistent hooting of the owls, the distant howls of the wolves, drove the party nearer together around the fire. In every man's hand was a long forked stick, upon every stick was a slice of bear-meat, and far into the night each man roasted and ate, roasted and ate. Very little sufficed for the novice—too fat and rich by far for a stomach used for so many years to Boston crackers and other Seminary ambrosia. As to the rest of the party, they rioted and revelled in the scorched meat until each fairly streamed down his blowzy beard and to his very feet with grease. At intervals Toad and Zed would lay aside their toasting-sticks to dance a violent hornpipe. "Settle my stim-mick so's I can hold a little more!" was the explanation vouchsafed by them to the company.

But there was no whisky! Only to a certain degree did Mr. Long's large supply of coffee, which by a singular coincidence he happened to have with him, make up for its absence. Mr. Wall and his ally exert themselves to make up for the painful absence in question to their utmost power.

"Sure you two ain't got a flask about you!" is the flattering result of their efforts to entertain the company, so well do they succeed.

It was after twelve before the party were asleep about their fire. In fact, Toad and Zed were up and down the entire night, roasting and eating as the state of their stomachs rendered it possible. By the rising of the sun the whole party had finished a hearty breakfast, and were

ready to be off. Mr. Long and his friend in one direction, the rest in the other.

“If you have no special use for it, I would be glad to have the bear-skin,” is Mr. Wall’s request of Doc. Meggar.

That gentleman accordingly accedes, and himself rolls up the wardrobe of the deceased bear and binds it securely on behind Mr. Wall’s saddle. It was the first occasion on which he had ever done any thing of the kind, or of any kind, for any one. “And I would be much obliged if you would get this poor dog home in some way,” Mr. Wall continues, addressing himself to Zed. “A little care now, and he will be ready for another hunt.”

“Me! carry that dog!” exclaims that gentleman—disgust and astonishment struggling for ascendancy in his very dirty face; and he declines the task in a whirlwind of blasphemy.

“Ef I was to say, Zed, you *eat* this here dog, you’d do it—not briled either—raw! you’d *hev* it to do,” remarks Doc. Meggar, composedly. “Yes, sir,” he continues to Mr. Wall, “I’ll see he does it.” And he did. “Be glad to hev you drop in whenever you’re passin’,” he adds, as he shakes his hand.

“That Institution of yours,” Mr. Long remarks, after half an hour’s riding from camp, “fits a man all those years, I dessay, to tell men the Gospel after you’ve got hold on them! But to get hold on people like these Meggar boys—an’ there’s thousands of them—in the gen’ral run, does it fit ’em for *that*? Make ’m like Christ on the sea-shore—”

But we dare not utter the heresy of Mr. Long’s question nor Mr. Wall’s reply.

“You fool folks thought that fellar missed when he shot that wild-cat. Soon as he fired,” lies Toad, in continuance of conversation in camp after the friends have left, “I seed

tail of the wild-cat hangin' in top of a cotton-wood, its head a-grinnin' in the forks of a black-jack a hunder yards the other way! See Thunder! *He* knows. Stuck to him to the last! Don't you go an' forget to carry that splintered pup home, Zed."

"Pitchin' head-foremost into bar one minit, gone away back after lame pup, tyin' his leg up with handkercher teared into strings the next. What's pup to *him*?" And Zed manifested a strong tendency to curse the absent benefactor.

"Zed, you look here!" interrupted Doc. Meggar, composedly. "You jest lemme hear one word agin this stranger, an' you'll hev me on your hands, sure."

"Well!" exclaimed Zed, with abundant oaths. "Never knew *you* to take up for a man afore in *my* life. Sky's goin' to fall! Whisky's gin out, that's it!"

"An' there's brown Bob Long," continued Doc., still more composedly. "We all know what he *was*, an' we all know what he *is*. Some *tremenjus* change has tooken that man, and 'tain't for the worse, nuther. For one, I believe in Bob Long; an' what's more, I intend the rest of you shall too. We all know he's in the right. It's like cowards not to say so."

At this point Jake gives a sounding slap upon his leg, and exclaims, "I'll be shot!"

No one understands this in the light of more than a figurative request, and wait for an explanation.

"It's the preacher, boys!" he exclaims, with energy; "sure's you live, the *preacher*! Wall, he said his name was. None of us didn't notice at the time. I rec'lect it now; name of the man Bob wanted us to go an' hear preach."

"Couldn't account for it before," said Toad, after the general expression of "the crowd" was over in some de-

gree, and with his hand upon his throat. "For last twenty-four hours every time I was rippin' out a curse it felt sorter stickin' like jest here."

His friends had themselves observed in him no hesitancy of the kind; yet not a man there but *had* remarked a restraint upon himself in the company of their new acquaintance.

"Never said a thing, never gave even a sour look, so fur as *I* see," remarked Jake. "Pleasant as you please, too. If that chap is a preacher I ha'n't no objections to preachers myself."

"An' that accounts for that book," said Doc. "Told you how I rode up an' found him settin' on that old bar. May I be"—and his language was extremely strong—"ef that man wasn't readin' his Bible! Think of a preacher tearin' like a flash of lightnin' through bresh sich as that, gettin' ahead of every body, killin' a bar first shot, then settin' down on the bar like in a pulpit a-readin' his Bible! You may count me *in* after this. I believe in preachers myself."

It was a decree—an edict. It was the inauguration of a revolution—a revolution so sudden and radical as to be received in profound silence. All there knew how much it meant.

"Hev you got a clean shirt, Toad?" asked Doc. Meggar, somewhat suddenly, half an hour later, as they all rode home together, the remains—not very much—of the game fastened behind their saddles.

"A clean shirt! Can't say I hev," replied that gentleman. "Ha'n't no use for any I knows on."

"Hev *you* got any, Zed?" asks Doc. of that individual.

"Nary shirt; last went for gallon of whisky an' a pack o' cards. I hed *two* onst," continues Zed, with some pride. "Nary shirt now!" he adds, with charming candor. "Ain't

a goin' to get married, Doc.?" he asks, with considerable alarm.

"I an' the boys 'll hev to loan you both," is the composed reply. "We're all of us a goin' to hear that man preach next Sunday—ev'ry Sunday—an' you've both of you got to go too."

There is a long-continued and profound silence after this as they ride.

"Tell you what, fellers, I'm skeard," remarks Jake at length. "Months ago I come upon the old 'oman a makin' shirts. 'Who for?' I asked. 'For you boys,' says she. 'An' what for?' says I. 'To go to meetin' in,' says she. 'Meetin'!' says I, an' I swore a few. 'Yes you will, Jake,' says she, softly like, a-sewin' on. 'Yes you will,' says she. An' she a-prayin' at it 'hind the butter-beans. Tell you what, fellers, I feel skeared!"

CHAPTER XIX.

The Diocletian of these Days.

IT was only a fragment of wrapping-paper not larger than the palm of your hand, yet it came upon and covered forever like a tombstone of heaviest marble the entire question as to whether or no Charles Wall is to be pastor of the city church. In this way :

Ours being a free country, the citizens of Hoppleton have about as much access to any one part of their post-office as to another. Or if any body hesitates a little in reference to going behind the letter-boxes and assisting in sorting the mails, wondering over the post-marks on the letters, having the first look at the illustrations of the magazines, and the like, Tom Hopple makes any such a one a deputy postmaster in a trice, and so removes all possible objection to the fullest access to all his realm. Thus there were only the usual two dozen deputies, or thereabout, handling the mail-bags the evening the all-important letter arrived from Mr. Langdon on behalf of the city church, conveying to Mr. Wall the nephew an invitation to the same as pastor thereof. And so that gentleman's fortunes, as far as that church is concerned, are poised for a moment within that letter upon the edge of the littered table about which the deputies crowd laughing and talking. A nail's breadth more upon the table and it will remain there, be delivered, be accepted ! But the letter falling unobserved upon the doubly littered floor, the wrapping of a newspaper is dropped upon it the moment after ; the letter disappear-

ing thus forever from the eye of man. Luke, the yellow boy, crams it, in the centre of an armful of paper, into the stove next morning; and the unanimous call of the magnificent church ends as ignominiously as Alexander's dust. Not hearing from the same, Mr. Wall junior, more mortified than he cares to show, accepts the pressing offer of the church in the Likens neighborhood, forsaken just now by Mr. Merkes in coming to Hoppleton to teach.

Of course there had followed other correspondence between the young clergyman and the somewhat astonished church in question. Having once pledged himself, however, to the country church, he refuses to recede therefrom, to the great amazement and still greater respect of all who know him.

"It is a manifest Providence!" he reasons with his uncle, who acknowledges it, though by no means so readily as he had done that which had seemed to call his nephew to the city instead.

When he learns from Mrs. General Likens that John is actually coming out there to teach school, when John soon after arrives with her trunks and is installed in her school held in the church building, the Providence grows clearer.

And so we are quietly settled down in the Likens neighborhood for the present. This evening Mrs. General Likens is imparting valuable advice, in unceasing continuance, to John, seated at the supper-table.

"No, child, whatever you do, don't you never marry a preacher!" very solemnly, even said as with the menace of prophecy.

Mr. Wall is shut up in his room studying all of each morning, away visiting among his charge all of every afternoon. John is absent at school all day, imparting and receiving too a vast deal of instruction. The General is over the place, pipe in mouth, looking gravely after the black

ones, pretty much all day. Even when he occupies his arm-chair out on the porch or beside the fire—for fall is coming on—he is to his wife like a cliff worn smooth by the long-continued wash of the surf; he listens too impassively, listens too much as if he was not listening at all. Very solemn and silent the General is becoming, having the aspect, as he sits and smokes, as if he were waiting, waiting for something, waiting fully prepared and willing when it should arrive.

“I can’t exactly describe it,” Laura Wall had said in the family circle at Hoppleton after a week’s visit to General Likens, “the change that is coming over John. She is perfectly well, round and plump, soft and rosy. But she has become even more silent than she used to be.”

“Worn out with that wretched school-room—what a girl she is!” Mrs. Wall had ventured, an invalid herself.

“Not at all,” Laura had eagerly replied. “She is not worried at all. You know how happy she always was before. She seems even more so now, only a deeper, quieter kind of cheerfulness, more serene, more peaceful. She is amazingly beautiful—all lighted up from *within* somehow. My wonder is how Charles—”

“Charles is *engaged* to Louisiana,” interrupted Mrs. Wall, promptly.

“Yes, and Louisiana is as much inferior to John as a wax baby is to a living one,” says Laura indignantly. “All that Louisiana is consists in what is around her and on her. A beautiful, good-natured good-for-nothing! There is nothing has lowered Charles in my opinion so much as for *him* actually to want to marry such a girl!”

“Hush, Laura,” says her father at the head of the table, “the servants might hear you!” for Laura has quite flashed up at the thought.

The solemn fact, sir! They would not have cared a straw for property themselves. They would have consented to see Laura married to any poor but respectable man. But Charles! That was another thing. To have him wedded to that rich, indolent, luxurious Louisiana was an idea they would once have scouted. But when they grew to know that their nephew actually *could* marry her if he would, their desire that he should gained upon them like an infatuation. In their own day they had known so much of the lack of money that for their nephew to possess it in abundance was a thing so unlike their own experience as to have the charm of splendid novelty—the aspect of enchantment. They did not deprecate his being called upon to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Not at all. Oh, not at all! And yet for him to be the master of a comfortable house and hosts of servants, with an ample purse to relieve the destitute, entirely free from all the small incessant miseries of an insignificant and uncertain salary—there was a fascination in this they did not even endeavor to resist. They had both, silently but entirely, set their hearts upon the marriage. They took a pride in having Louisiana at the house, in seeing her at their modest table; a pride in the very quantity of her jewelry, the richness of her silks, in her very indolence, even. Singular, but it was so very terrible—that “screwin’ an’ twistin’ and pinchin’, turnin’ your things inside out an’ upside down until they’re worn act’lly *out*!” as Mrs. General Likens said. Nero’s wild beasts tearing the Christians in the arena hurt them, even when the screams were transfigured, between the instant of feeling the pain and the after-instant of uttering the same, into psalms or prayer.

And there is Mrs. General Likens. All her dread in regard to John is lest she should marry some poor man—a poor preacher being the worst possible species of a poor

man. John was to marry young Burleson—that was her settled plan. Her young pastor was to marry Louisiana Mills; if not, there was Araminta Allen—rich, even if she *did* use snuff. “Snuff?” Mrs. General Likens had remarked. “Goodness knows, it’s a most a universal thing among the ladies in this one of the Southern States, an’ a minister’s wife oughtn’t to be *too* unlike other people. Dare say the Yankees do worse!” So that it was only harping upon an old string when, that night at her table, she said to John: “Whatever you do, child, don’t you never marry a poor preacher!”

“Why not, Mrs. General Likens?” says John. There was a gleam of fun in the corners of her lips, and the smallest possible fraction of a glance at young Mr. Wall, as she asked the question. “Perhaps it is only a prejudice you have. You can have no reason for it, I am sure. How do you *know* it is so terrible a thing?”

“How do I know, child?” exclaimed Mrs. General Likens, in astonished surprise.

“You have read about such things in books; perhaps you have heard exaggerated stories from others,” explained John—mischief in her glance, as she said this, and plaiting the table-cloth with downcast eyes.

The General turned slowly from the table towards the fire, pipe in hand. With a fatal fascination Mr. Wall takes a seat by his side. “I’m gettin’ to be an old lady now,” said Mrs. General Likens, plaintively, after a considerable pause. “My opportunities ha’n’t been very grand, but I’ve used what I had.”

“Old ’oman, I wouldn’t!” interrupted her husband at this juncture. “Mrs. Merkes is happy up among the saints in heaven now. What’s the use?”

“I must, General, I must. It’s not pleasure, I’m sure, it’s duty,” said his wife, with a show of deference to her hus-

band, a deference which John and Charles had observed to have singularly increased in the last few months. "You must let me, General, if it's only this once. Didn't I know *her* well, poor thing? Didn't I know *him*?"

The General subsided as if into sombre reflections. It was too portentous. No one spoke. Mrs. General Likens breaks the silence at last: "'No; I *knew* you wouldn't believe it, ma'am; but I was as ruddy and stout a woman as you'd ever want to see,' she says, says she to me. 'I've tried and tried to stand up against it,' says she. 'On my bended knees, morning an' night—often through the day—I'd drop down by the cradle, and cry and pray when baby was asleep and the other children was out. I got some help that way. But, then, month after month, year after year, it *wears*—it *wears* one so,' says she."

"Excuse me—says who?" inquired Mr. Wall.

"Mrs. Merkes, of course," replies Mrs. General Likens. "Not that she came out so at first. No, she was as reserved as could be for months after she first settled here. Bless you, we all knew it, but not from her. If there ever was a good woman she was. It happened in this way: I was over there one morning. One of the black ones went with me to carry a quarter of beef, and I went over with the saltpetre an' molasses an' things to show her how to corn it. It was so I came in on her a little sudden. She was setting on her low rocking-chair by the cradle, trying to rock that poor little scrap of a Lucy of theirs asleep. Mary, Alexander, and Samuel—he was the oldest—were off somewhere.

"John, child," added Mrs. General Likens at this juncture, "please step into the linen-closet and get me another towel. You see," hastily whispered Mrs. General Likens, during John's absence, "Mrs. Merkes was *expectin'* — couldn't go out them days—ahem! She had been cryin'

hard," continued she, as John returned. "All day it looked like she tried to hold herself in for a while. Well, I didn't notice. I had brought over a pair of red shoes for whichever of the children they might fit. That amused Lucy, playing with them in her cradle. After a while we got into a kind of cosy chat. I saw it coming in her eyes while I was talking, minutes before it arrived. At last she jest up an' told me all. How they was married; it seemed ages an' ages back, she said. How they was settled in some place, I've forgotten the name. They'd a home of their own there, bought with her money; *he* had nothing from the start—bless you, in debt for his education at that. She told me how nicely she fixed up the place, flower-garden, little lawn in front, an' all. How she tried to please the people and make him popular. 'And Mr. Merkes was a better preacher then than people seem to think him now,' she said. It was before his troubles had soured him and hardened him, and worried all his life out, almost, I suppose she meant. All about the Sunday-school, Sewing Society, and all, she told me, too. How, jest when Samuel, their first baby, was born, came a quarrel with the people—something about their having a melodeon in the choir, or such like. How her husband resigned his pulpit one day in a huff; wouldn't listen to any thing from any body; sold the pretty place for nigh nothing, to get right away. And it's been so ever since. 'Mrs. General Likens,' says she, 'it was the first and last home of our own we ever had.' And then she went on to tell me how they moved to this place and that place, and the other. Pleasant at first. Then a quarrel was sure to come. It was about the choir, or it was about the Sabbath-school, or about the hour when service ought to begin, or ought *not* to begin, or about the salary, or about something a little *too* severe Mr. Merkes had said in the pulpit or out of it. Trouble, trouble, quar-

rel, quarrel, all the time! I never heard such a pitiful story. She knew she oughtn't to be talking so; but she kept on only the faster. Seemed to me as if she'd kept it to herself and thought it over until she was *too* full. When once she began she couldn't stop. It all came out in spite of her."

"Why didn't the man lay aside his profession, roll up his sleeves, and go at some other business, if he didn't succeed in that?" asked the General, meditatively.

"I'm astonished at you, General," said his wife. "That was his *calling*. He would have felt like Jonah flying from his work; would have been miserable, expecting the storm and the whale every hour.

"And I asked Mrs. Merkes. 'Teaching?' says she; 'he's tried that often. If possible, it's worse than preaching. It's more worrying. Besides, Mr. Merkes was certain to make some of the parents mad about something in the school-room. And then, when he came to settle up the tuition bills, there was sure to be a difficulty.'"

"But there are other occupations," began the young minister.

"Yes, yes; I told her so," continued Mrs. General Likens, hastily. 'No, ma'am,' she says, shaking her head. 'Here's a young man enters college, say at eighteen; studies for the ministry there and in the Seminary some six years or more in all, steady along. When he comes out a preacher he must be fitted for that, for it unfits him for any thing else in the world! He don't understand any other business. More than that, he don't understand *people*. As to any bodily labor, one day's work with axe or hoe's sure to lay Mr. Merkes up for a week; partly because he ain't used to it; partly because he got dyspeptic overstudying himself. Wherever money's concerned, too—making bargains, collecting, any thing of the kind—he's *sure* to lose!'"

“Way with all preachers,” murmured the General. “So little accustomed to handling it.”

“‘Ah, there’s the misery of it, Mrs. General Likens,’ she says to me. ‘Mr. Merkes is unhappy as a preacher; but it’s *that* or nothing else. Wretched in it; more wretched out of it! And then there’s the salary,’ she says to me; ‘some people look on Christmas as a happy time. It’s just the worst of all the year to us. The salary is so small at best. And when the time comes to get it in the officers of the church and Mr. Merkes have to go over the subscription-paper. This name can’t pay—lost too much money during the year some way; this one finds he can only pay half he promised, and hard work to do that; this next one will try and *see* what he can do. The next one is that man who took such offense at something the minister said, or his wife said, or the man’s children told him the minister’s children said. Next man can’t stand such preaching; don’t catch him coming to hear him again, much less pay. This next family on the paper has moved away. That other family was carried off since it subscribed by some other denomination; and so on and so on. Settling up, Mrs. General Likens,’ says she, ‘for last year’s bad enough, but the making up the salary for the next year—oh me! Officers of the church go at it from a dreadful sense of duty only, hunting people down, reasoning with this man, cornering that man—squeezing them to subscribe. Just fancy your husband, Mrs. General Likens,’ says she, ‘you just fancy the General up that way on the block at New-Year’s like a nigger, being excepted to, and run down, and higgled over!’ and she would have cried, only the tears were all shed already. I do believe she really loved her husband, and he *was* a good man—a real pious man, though a mighty poor preacher, whatever he may *have* been; uninteresting, you know. ‘If they could only not *tell* Mr.

Merkes so much,' she said. 'But, then, he needn't tell *you* about it,' says I. 'It's his *disposition* to talk over his slights, to dwell on them,' says she; 'seems to take a kind of satisfaction in it. Tell them!' says she; 'why, unless I was stone-blind I couldn't help reading it all in his face at table, in his manner to me and the children, to say nothing of his groaning and twisting about in bed all night.' 'Why don't he jump on a horse and ride 'round, exercise—brighten himself up?' says I. 'But where's the horse?' says she. 'He couldn't afford to buy one; and if he did, he couldn't pay for provender for one. He can't afford, even, to buy a watch; that keeps him nervous and guessing on Sabbaths lest he's too late for church; and it's impossible for him to tell, except by people gettin' up and going out, whether or no he isn't preaching too long. A horse!' says she. 'I tell you, Mrs. General Likens, the dyspepsy he got in the Seminary's the cause of all his trouble. After he's been recreating a little, for a week or so, he's fifty times brighter and happier, in the pulpit and out of it—only it's not often he gets the chance. It's *poverty* that crushes Mr. Merkes!' she says, 'an' keeps up his dyspepsy—long-continued *poverty*! It's that keeps him awake all night; it's that makes him preach the dull sermons the people complain of; it's that makes him seem gloomy and sour; it's that is stamped so into his face. He's struggled and prayed against anxious care for the morrow; but then his children and his mortifications and his slights and his debts year after year, seem killing his very soul, with all the faith in it. You see, a minister's calling is a peculiar one, Mrs. General Likens,' says she. 'What with studying his sermons, visitin' the sick and dyin', burying the dead, consoling the survivors, dealing with backsliders, struggling with the anxious—a thousand times more anxious about them than they are about themselves; describing what

heaven is like and hell, and all that—his feelings are on a terrible strain and stretch all the time! They get to be too much brought out, too much on the skin! He can't get hardened like a doctor does—it's spiritual concerns, eternal matters, the soul, God, heaven, hell, that his mind is straining at all the time. Unless his body's strength is kept up to the pitch of his mind it gets nervous, irritable, worn out. That's the way, Mrs. General Likens,' says she, 'the wicked report got out about his whipping our Samuel so severe. He never intended it, but he was so worried just then about that Amelia Ann matter and Araminta Allen's terrible to-do about it. If it was only the custom for ministers to keep their *body* in full health—if they could afford it only. I *can't* think, Mrs. General Likens,' says she, 'that our Heavenly Father *intends* his servants should drag along that way; it cripples them so, you see, for His service! Besides—'

"Come now, Polly, that's enough," interposed the General. "Do let's talk of somethin' more cheerful."

"Three years ago he happened to get a wedding fee," says Mrs. Merkes," continued Mrs. General Likens, not heeding the General's expostulation. "'Now wedding fees are always spent,' says she, 'in buying actual necessities of life; he always gives them to me, manages to borrow them next day, however. This time he sends and has his life insured, brings me the policy to put away. I never knew him to take as much satisfaction in any thing as in that. "It's a solid gratification to me ev'ry hour of the day, and when I lie awake at night," says he. "I think, if I die, well, there'll be *something* anyhow for you and the children—a little, but *something*"—an' he stooped down an' kissed me on the forehead—first time he'd done that in months,' she said. 'Well, Mrs. General Likens,' says she, 'three months after he had to make another pay-

ment or forfeit his policy. It was only some ten dollars or so, but he couldn't raise it; did his best; couldn't! I don't think I ever saw him more cut down in my life,' says Mrs. Merkes. Don't you ever marry a preacher, child!" said Mrs. General Likens, abruptly, almost savagely, to John.

"Do stop!" pleaded the General, despairingly. "You're one of Job's comforters, to Mr. Wall here."

"'But why couldn't he have asked some of his members for a loan, Mrs. Merkes?' said I," Mrs. General Likens continued. "'No, ma'am,' says she. 'The moment a preacher begins to beg this sum and that from members, he becomes a bother an' a trouble to them; they lose all respect for him; he is a burden; a nuisance they're impatient to get rid of. Mr. Merkes was cowed and tamed and whipped down by poverty, but he couldn't do that. He's been waitin' and hopin'; but he's never had the money to get another policy since. He's had wedding fees, but they had to go for things—shoes, clothes, pressin' debts. And there's one thing, Mrs. General Likens,' says she; 'it is the collections for Foreign Missions, Tract Societies, and the like. Mr. Merkes often and often preaches a sermon, and has a collection taken up in the church for this object an' that; it's a regular quarterly or monthly thing. After benediction the officers count up the money they've got in the hats—a good deal of it given by people that haven't paid the pastor his dues for years. They get Mr. Merkes to mail the amount off to some society a thousand miles away, and the church owing *him*—he actually *suffering* the day he mails it for the money himself. It *does* seem to me as if they ought to pay their pastor first. Mr. Merkes has often told me he's tempted to grudge the very boy that sweeps the church, makes the fires, lights the lamps, the regular pay they give him every month, while

hundreds of dollars are owing him—he needin’ his pay mor’n the boy needs his. You see the boy will stop right off if they don’t pay. Mr. Merkes can’t.’ ”

“ But why does he *not* leave in such a case ? ” asked the young minister, very indignant.

“ Very question I asked Mrs. Merkes,” continued Mrs. General Likens. “ ‘How can he?’ she says ; ‘no invitation to any other field ; nowhere to go ! If he had, no money to move on. And how about his debts ? Leave them unpaid behind him ? No, ma’am, a martyr—and *chained* to his stake ! ’ says she. ‘ Oh, Mrs. General Likens,’ says she ; ‘ if’t please God Mr. Merkes was only a farmer, raisin’ his corn and his punkins on a little patch of ground—serving his Master that way ! I’ll tell you, Mrs. General Likens,’ says she, growing kind of desperate ; ‘ once I went off from home to spend the day. I forgot something, and had to go back to the house. You see, Mr. Merkes had no study but in the sitting-room, his books piled about here and there. He was glad to have me and the children get away occasionally—give him a good chance to study. That day I went back. I passed by the window where he was. It was summer, and the window was up. I heard somethin’ like groanin’, an’ glanced in. There he was, lyin’ flat on the floor. The Bible was open before him, an’ he was agonizin’ in prayer. It curdled my blood to listen : “ No blessing on my labors,” he groaned ; “ no sinners converted, no backsliders brought back, no interest in preaching or prayer-meeting—and my family ! ” he groaned ; and I knew well what he meant. “ And my debts, debts, debts ! ” he said. “ I *want* to do what is right ! ” he groaned. “ Take me to some other field,” he says ; “ or open the way for me to leave the ministry, or take me out of the world ! Am a *husband* ! Am a *father* ! Can’t help myself ! ” he says. “ At least make me submis-

sive to Thy will!" I could only catch a word here and there,' says she. 'I tell you, Mrs. General Likens,' says she, 'it almost broke my heart, only it was nothing unexpected to me. To see him with his thin, gray hair, and his pale, hollow face, and the tears running down, and he drawn up in a spasm of agony like on that floor! I dare not run in to him. I didn't know one single thing to say to encourage him, not one,' she said. 'I felt so awful I could have *screamed*! felt savage; but what could I do?' she says, says she. 'The lady where I staid all day had a fine dinner; but it was little I could eat of it. I *know* I oughtn't to tell you all I have, Mrs. General Likens,' says she; 'but it's getting worse and worse every day. I do believe,' she says, stopping solemnly in the midst of her tears, 'he must lose his mind if things go on so. He's getting so wakeful at night, so irritable, so nervous! Think he's a peculiar case?" asked Mrs. General Likens warmly of her little audience. "Don't you believe it! Among preachers everywhere there's hundreds on hundreds of such Elijahs lyin' groanin' under juniper-trees. No, child," said Mrs. General Likens, with a sudden application of her narrative to John; "don't you ever, ever, *ever* marry a preacher!"

"A minister's salary would do generally," said the General, during the pause which followed, "if only it was *paid* at all regular. As it is he has to buy on a credit, an uncertain one at that, all his store things. The merchant he puts on so much over an' above because it's a credit bargain. If the parson only had his money in hand to buy with he could get every thing one-third cheaper. An' then them debts, like a nightmare on a man! Their reputation as a minister is so tied up in their payin' *their* debts; example to the flock, you know. My wonder is they can preach at all! Poor sermons? I don't blame a

man for one; nine-tenths of his time an' heart an' brain given up to scuffling along, to say nothing of people criticising the sermons, contrary members, blunt-spoken church officers, an' the like."

"James?" broke in Mrs. General Likens. "Yes, I *did* give my consent he should serve the Lord in the ministry, if it was God's will. I couldn't say yes for years. At last, that's the reason, I thinks, the Lord won't convert him. Better be converted, even if he *does* have to be a preacher, than not be converted at all, I says to myself. An' so he *was* converted, sure enough! I said yes to it; but I thought, Oh, pshaw, we have plenty of property, he'll have *that* to support on in his preachin'. I'm afraid that's how I came to say yes. I know it's mighty wicked in me to feel so," continued Mrs. General Likens, ingenuously. "If it was for him to go to China, India, or some other of the islands of the sea, I wouldn't care. Or if it was to lay his head across a log an' have it chopped off for Christ right away, I wouldn't care so; but to be a preacher—despised like by outsiders an' starved by insiders—worry, worry, bother, bother *all* the time—it was more than I had grace for about James."

"Ev'ry preacher isn't Mr. Merkes, however, Mr. Wall," said the General, more thoughtful of his guest. "Common run of people couldn't *like* Mr. Merkes, that's one reason in regard to him. An' their not liking him was the protest like of Health against Disease; the natural risin' up like of simple, sweet, everyday kind of feelin's against sour, sickly, unnatural ones. Now," continued the General, "there's your uncle, for instance; he isn't worn to death all the time about money-matters—don't look like it, at least."

Both John and the nephew winced.

"Let me tell you the difference between them, General,"

spoke up John. "I believe almost every minister has more or less that kind of trouble, and all their life. But Mr. Merkes seems so constituted that such things strike *into* him—make a festering wound. They happen to Mr. Wall, too—perhaps so, I mean—only they glance off as they happen."

"Holds up the Shield of Faith, I guess," interjected Mrs. General Likens, wiping vigorously at the cups and saucers.

"I imagine Mr. Merkes takes any hint of a defect in him as an insult," continued the fair philosopher. "Mr. Wall takes any such hint, if there ever is any, gladly as help towards raising him nearer his own standard. Mr. Merkes seems to be too sensitive and sore altogether to every thing—perhaps I wrong him."

"And I believe," said the nephew, "my uncle sees the hand of a Father just as much in a needed sum of money withheld from him as in an unexpected sum received; as much in any bitter remark against him as in a flattering one."

"I've known that uncle of yours," said the General, reflectively, "for years now, an' through rain and shine he's the happiest man I ever knew. Let us talk about *him* a little; we've had enough about Mr. Merkes for once."

"No, we ha'n't," remarks his wife, promptly. "I ain't satisfied till somebody explains things to me. Lo, I am with you always, the Saviour said. And all that Sermon on the Mount about the grass of the field, the lilies, the sparrows; how *can* a man read that, an' the like, over an' over; preach on it too, and not profit by it more himself? Nine-tenths of that man's misery was in his moods, his—pshaw! what you call it—fancies? notions? The Lord He always *has* provided. 'Love,' says she to him, sittin' by her bed that day she was dyin', 'what a pity we

couldn't 'a trusted Him all along ; at last He *did* provide, you know !' she says to him. 'If we only could 'a trusted in Him all along how much misery we would 'a saved ourselves ! Not that I blame you though, darling,' she says, quick like. A-workin' like new yeast, fermentin' like I don't know what, all the time he was. If he only could have gone sound asleep—staid asleep for a year ! Cross at Lucy just before he begins to say blessing at table ; boxes Alexander's ears for dropping his fork the minute Amen's out of his mouth ! Sour at his wife for not making Samuel still as a mouse in prayers ; putting that poor little pale-faced Lucy of theirs in the closet the moment he's up from his knees at family worship because she dropped her little hymn-book ! Scold ? how he *did* scold because the servant there broke in on him, in his private devotions I believe it was !" the old lady even dares add.

"You seem to have known—" began John, with a smile.

"Yes, bless you, child, it was when his wife was sick ; you see I went over an' staid there to nurse," said Mrs. General Likens, the more rapidly as she was talking on against the tugging within of her own conscience. "For months before Mr. Merkes had been worse than ever—bother about his salary, trouble with Araminta Allen about Amelia Ann ; then his rest was broken o' nights by the children. Lucy'd get uncovered an' cry with cold—whimper—she didn't dare to cry. Alexander, he'd get thirsty in bed, go stealing over the floor to the bucket, stumble over a chair, and wake up his father *that* way. Samuel, he'd cry out, seeing a booger—and so it went on : it almost killed that man to have his sleep broken—his *brain* needed it so, I suppose. Yes, it' began months before Mrs. Merkes was so sick ; you see he had such a large family *already*, he thought. Cross—!"

'Polly, you stop !' said the General, decidedly.

“Yes,” said his wife, reining in and shaking her head slowly, her face full of reminiscences—“yes, I *had* better—it’s all over now; but at the time it was awful! But, well! ‘I’m not sorry; I’d rather it was so,’ she said. ‘It’s better in heaven;’ that’s what she said when I told her the little baby was dead. She *would* take the poor little rat of a thing in her arms, hugged its little cold body a while to her bosom, an’ give it back to me. ‘I’m not sorry,’ says she; ‘it oughtn’t to have come—too many before.’ An’ I was not sorry,” said Mrs. General Likens, energetically, “when *she* died too—not a bit of it. ‘I don’t blame you at all, darling,’ she whispered to him. ‘You’ve had so *much* to try you. Please try, precious, to bear with the poor little children; they couldn’t help coming, you know. Little Lucy, darling,’ she whispered to him, ‘she’s such a poor, pale, frightened little scrap, please don’t—an’ she whispered so low I couldn’t hear; I was rubbin’ her limbs with brandy, you see. ‘It’ll be all right,’ says she, ‘when we all get together at last in heaven, precious. To him that overcometh will I give—I give,’ an’ she rambled off.

“Such a desolate house,” continued Mrs. General Likens, pausing to wipe her eyes, “that cold, rainy mornin’ the corpse lay there on the lounge, I never want to see again—the poor children sticking close around the lounge, afraid of their father, so white and cold, sittin’ by the fire, a book in his hand. You see, Mrs. Merkes had been the only sunshine in that house—a gentle little woman, tryin’ hard to hope for the best all the time. It provoked Mr. Merkes, her putting the best interpretation upon every thing that happened—it was contradictin’ him. When she saw that worried him too, she just kept silence, while he grumbled and murmured—tried to warm him by her silent smilin’, her cheerful looks. She hath done what she could. Yes, that

might 'a been cut on *her* tomb. If *he* had only been the man she was a woman, now ! Fix up old clothes ! Make a little money stretch a mile ! Keep herself neat on just nothin' at all ! I never *did* know such a woman !” said Mrs. General Likens, warmly. “Nobody ever quarrelled with *her*. Araminta Allen, even, bless you ! many an' many a bolt of domestic, an' barrel of flour, turkeys, butter, eggs, an' all such like, she's sent to her through me. Araminta's tongue outruns every thing I ever heard when she gets to talking about Amelia Ann,” adds Mrs. General Likens. “She was a little afeared of Mr. Wall, day she was here ; but she never had a word to say against Mrs. Merkes.”

“What would you say, Mrs. General Likens,” said John, after a while, with laughing eyes, “if Mr. Merkes was to marry in Hoppleton ? Laura Wall told me something when she was here.”

“You don't mean to tell me Laura Wall is that crazy ?” ejaculated the lady of the house, laying down every thing out of her hands to lift them up in horror.

“Never mind ; who it is is a secret,” said John with delight. “If it turns out to be true, we'll hear of it.”

“Well !” said Mrs. General Likens, bringing her hands slowly down—“*well*”—and she was silent for a space, “I *did* hear that Josiah Evers was courtin' Miss Laura,” said the old lady, at length, “but Mr. Merkes ? *well*,” and then, after another pause, she added : “so *you* don't marry a preacher, John, it's all I ask.”

CHAPTER XX.

Something about John and Edward.

HOPPLETON was astonished—John has gone away to teach!

“People lie about my being cross with you,” Issells, the peevish tailor, remarks to his worn-out wife at supper, “and I *may* be put out a little by the everlasting bother and misfortune I have, stitch, stitch, stitching all the time, sick or well; people dissatisfied with their fits, people promising and not paying, and *you* sick all the time, of course! as if I did not have worry enough without that; but just look! Think that girl didn’t have some good cause for leaving? And he in the pulpit on Sundays preaching away his miserable stuff about love to God and love to man! Hypocrites, the whole of them! It’s the detestable cant in the world that is the cause of all the villainy in it! Had my way, I’d sew them all up, preachers and the fools that listen to them, in sacks and pitch them into the Atlantic.”

“What girl? I don’t know what you are talking about!”

“What girl? The one living in that Preacher Wall’s family. She’s gone off somewhere to teach school. Cruel to her. I have no more doubt of it than I have of my own existence. As beautiful and patient-looking a young creature as I ever saw in my life. And there’s that daughter of his—old maid—comes to see you so much when you are sick, with her flowers and things—dare say she could tell a story if she would.”

Mr. Josiah Evers, on hearing the same report, was surprised.

“But she will make a splendid teacher,” was his thought. “She is one of the kind that do not talk much—that rule by the eye instead. She can make them love and respect her. If ever a woman succeeds she will;” and Mr. Evers respected her that much the more than before. An excellent teacher himself, he could judge of qualification in others. “It shows, however, that she is as poor as I supposed. I am sorry, because I was almost ready to marry her,” he added, passing his right hand through his hair, and lingering with the fingers thereof among his scant whiskers. But here Mr. Josiah Evers’s thoughts took an indignant direction: “Why don’t these people pay their minister better?” This was the less astonishing, however, from the fact that Mr. Evers had never as yet contributed a cent towards the salary of Mr. Wall himself.

“Gone off to teach, eh?” Jack Clemur remarked, stirring the coals in the forge, while Lanny, his son, worked at the bellows. “Well, I’ve no objection. Teaching is easy work to sweating over the anvil, I guess. Hard work is the best thing in the world, especially for young people. And now, Lanny, I do sincerely hope you’ll be able to go to your own church on Sunday nights, instead of dressing up and going to Mr. Wall’s church for nothing else on earth but to see that Miss John, and to hear her sing. Do you think the Lord will ever bless you, pretending to worship him that way?”

Lanny had no words in reply. Since that tap upon the head from his father’s hammer, nothing had hurt him so much as her leaving. He worked on mechanically, but the world was for a time a wilderness to him.

M’Clarke bewailed her leaving as the loss of the best voice—next to his own—in the choir. Even Anna Burle-

son came over to Mr. Wall's to try and persuade her out of the notion.

"Bug is bother enough for me. The idea of twenty little dirty-faced things to take care of, treading on your skirts, pulling at your dress with their sticky hands! I solemnly declare," said Miss Anna, with perfect sincerity, "I would rather lie down on the spot at once and die and be buried than teach school! Don't go, John dear. There is Bug in a perfect stew about it. I didn't know the little ball of butter cared any thing but for cake before. As to Ned, of course he don't *say* any thing, dear! I declare I lay awake all last night expecting to hear a pistol go off in his room, or something. We love you, dear; you can't tell how much. We hope—you know—never mind—" and Miss Anna colored herself, if it was only as the reflection of John's face. Not a day but Miss Anna was becoming more acid in view of her wrongs, as poor Issells in view of his, but there was a freshness and sweetness about John that she could not resist. "There's that Louisiana Mills," Miss Anna continued. "Lazy, fat, good-for-nothing thing. If that father of hers would make her lay off her fine dresses, and cut off some of that hair, and lock up a little of that jewelry, and go far away from home, where she would have to get up early and eat corn-bread and molasses, and teach forty children all day, it would do *her* some good."

Perhaps it would. But if her own father could have pursued some such course with Miss Anna herself—given something for her thoughts and temper to grind on besides herself, it might have been a blessing to her also. One thing her father did do, of which no one else save himself and his pastor were ever aware—that is, call upon that pastor in a quiet way just at that juncture, and beg his acceptance, as an addition to his salary, of a very

round sum of money, according, at least, to village estimate.

“Thank you, Mr. Burleson—but no,” his pastor had said. “I dare say I know,” he continued, with a smile, “the cause of your kindness. It is a delicate matter. It is not because she imagines herself at all a burden. She knows she is not. We have always loved her more than a daughter; she has been more assistance to us than most daughters ever are. Gentle as she looks, amiable as she is, she inherits from her father a singular strength of character, a clearness and energy of purpose one would not imagine in a girl so young and so lovely. Her father was a—what you would call a first-class business-man. I don’t intend to flatter, but you remind me more of him than any man I know. I did not dream she had so much of her father in her, for she is the image of her mother, one of the loveliest of women. No. We have used every kind of persuasion with her in vain. Go she will, if only to give the matter a fair trial. She seems to have arranged it all when on a visit to General Likens; did not let us know until it was all a settled thing. Do you know, Mr. Burleson,” said the pastor, in his frank, impulsive way, “I believe—at least Mrs. Wall thinks so, and ladies are wonderful judges in such matters—that a member of your family has something to do with her leaving.”

“Ned?” exclaimed Mr. Burleson, with equal frankness. “I only wish he could get her! I don’t know what it is, there’s some screw loose about him—a sort of reckless, heedless, devil-may-care—a kind of scoffing—a lack of energy, of purpose in life; I hardly know what. There is something in that balk he made—I hardly know what else to call it—in religious matters years ago—you remember it—that has had a singular influence on him.”

“Charles tells me,” said Mr. Wall, “it is because Ed-

ward did not become a minister as he first intended. You know how intimate they are. I have conversed with him—Edward, I mean—several times. In fact, I wrote to him when he was in college. His religious condition is a singular one—a state of suspended animation—almost petrification. I remember a singular remark he made to me the other day. His religious knowledge seemed so clear that I mentioned it to him—wondered how, with such distinct conceptions of Divine truth, he could *feel* so little. ‘Your looking at religion,’ he said, ‘is as at a landscape in all the verdure, and leaf, and flower of summer; while I look on the same landscape under its winter aspect—no grass, or leaf, or flower, to obstruct the view—every stone on the ground, every twig and bough distinctly visible in the cold clear air!’ It made me shudder. ‘All winter, only, with me,’ he said. The fact is,” continued the pastor, “if a young man once fully resolves to preach the Gospel, with such a view as Edward had of the supreme dignity and grandeur of the work, and then fails, from almost any cause, to carry out his purpose, he is singularly unfitted thereby—pardon me—for being any thing else. Unless greed of money, from which your son is free, takes its place, every other aim seems low, every other motive powerless. His *heart* is dead! Only for the time, I hope!” the pastor added, earnestly.

“He never talks with me on such matters,” said the father. “I don’t understand him. He has mind enough—more than I have, for that matter—but you can’t get him to apply it steadily in any direction. He has heart a plenty; yet he has, or affects to have, a perfect heartlessness in regard to every thing. He distresses me! And I fear he is growing worse and worse. I would not speak of it to any one but yourself—not even Mrs. Burleson—but I am constantly in dread lest he should take to drinking or gam-

bling. I have a vague terror. He is so uncertain there is no telling any day what he may not do!" and the pastor noticed for the first time in the clear, somewhat hard face of the bank president, those dark lines at the corners of the eye, the lengthening shadows as of a setting sun, the hair-breadth droop at the corners of the mouth as from the tasting of a bitter cup. To think how one's hand may be full of gold, and the heart—so to speak—at the roots of the arm, full of wretchedness. Mr. Burleson was the richest man in Hoppleton, but there were happier homes in Hoppleton by far than his.

"I do not know how the idea has crept into my mind," says the bank president at last, "but I have taken a singular fancy to Miss John. If any thing could have influence upon Ned I do believe it would be some such woman as she seems—she is so young—is going to be. Her solid sense would be dower enough. I would consent to such a thing with all my heart. I only hope he may succeed. But I dare not let him know it; he is so contrary it would be the very way to prevent it. But the woman that marries Ned will have to take her chances in regard to him. He may be all she could wish—he may turn out— Ah, well, we will talk of something else."

Mr. Wall had been on the point of saying something of his own happiness in his nephew. It would hardly be appropriate just now, he thinks, and only says, "There is Charles, now. I only wish he had the practical sense, in worldly things at least, of Edward. We shut our candidates for the ministry up in a seminary by themselves for years, just when they are forming their habits for life. For whole years they are associated only with their professors and themselves—monks almost. There must be terrible error in our system. They come out too often enfeebled for life in health, separated in feeling and habits

from the people, scholastic, deficient in common-sense. One thing, however; if there is sound piety in the heart, and fixed purpose to live for God and man in the soul, a young man will in the end adapt himself, correct himself—”

“A living piety at heart, a fixed purpose in life,” interrupted Mr. Burleson—“exactly, and I dare say your nephew has it. There is nothing you may not hope for him in the future on that account. But, unfortunately, piety and purpose are just what Edward lacks. No definite course before him in life—no power in him to impel him along that course, even if he had one.”

However that might be, young Burleson found path and purpose enough to arrive from Hoppleton at General Likens’s front gate early one Saturday afternoon soon thereafter.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mr. Edward Burleson drinks deep of Helicon.

“**T**HAT young Burleson!” whispered Mrs. General Likens’s prophetic soul as soon as she saw—she was knitting upon the front piazza—the buggy turn into view up the road, long before she could see who was in it. “Just as I knew—exactly!” Mrs. General Likens exclaimed to herself, as that gentleman drew up at the gate, alighted, fastened his horse, and entered. Mrs. General Likens took a fresh needle to her knitting and looked approvingly upon him as he approached. She was glad to see him because he fulfilled her standing prophecy, and because there was no one at home to talk to him but herself.

“Don’t be afraid, Mr. Burleson,” she said, without rising; “walk in. Our dogs don’t bite. We had one in Virginia once—Tige we called him—bit a stage passenger, and the General he killed him. How’s all?”

“I had some business in the neighborhood, Madam. As I had to pass I thought I would stop a while,” fibbed Burleson, after due salutations. “The General is well, I hope?”

Mrs. General Likens scoffed inwardly at the plea of business, and informs the anxious applicant that the General is *not* well. “Some trouble in the chest,” she explains. “It’s only of late. The General’s hardly ever known what you may call a sick day. It must be his constant smokin’ injures him. The doctor said so. He tried to give up his pipe. ‘Pshaw—stuff!’ he says at last. ‘Remedy’s worse

than the disease. An' so he's been smokin', if possible, more'n ever."

"Is he at home this afternoon?" asks Burleson, not caring the millionth part of a straw whether he is or not.

"No," replies the wife, perfectly aware of it. "He went over to Araminty Allen's—remember you met her when you were here last—wore a crimson dress—soon after breakfast. Araminty is there alone by herself. She has I don't know how many black ones, and always in a snarl with them about something. The General has to go over almost every day to fix things up. He has a wonderful faculty man'ging hands, because he don't say much to them—don't allow them to say much to him. But Araminty she *will* talk to them, and they scare her. I'm mistaken if that yellow Phillis of hers—her cook woman—didn't do something more than scare her last night. Araminty was to have company to-day—and them's just the very times cooks pick out for a fuss. Anyhow, a boy rode over to get the General to ride over there with Miss John when she went—*she* was to spend the day there."

"That reminds me," said Burleson. "How is Miss John by this time? Mr. Wall's family will be asking after her when I return."

"Well, I can't entirely say," replied Mrs. General Likens, carefully impressing him with the idea that the lady inquired after was in rather a precarious condition than otherwise. "I can't say I know for certain that she uses snuff," continued the old lady, pausing on her needles to reflect; "but she associates with Araminty a great deal, or rather, Araminty associates with her all the time, an' Araminty she uses snuff constant. Yes, snuff and Amelia Ann, an' the way Mr. Merkes talked about Amelia Ann at the funeral—you heard about it?—are about all Araminty Allen lives on. She's mighty apt to have got in the habit—the snuff

I mean—with her—mighty apt! People say it ruins the complexion—Araminty is sallow enough, goodness knows—makes a body histeriky an' cross. They tell me it makes the hair come out by handfuls, spoils the teeth, injures one's lungs. Do you know whether it is so, Mr. Burleson?" she asks, with an anxious face but a laughing soul.

Mr. Burleson does not know the exact effects. He is positively certain it is, however, a most disgusting habit in every respect.

"And there's early risin' too, continued Mrs. General Likens. "*I* always had to get up early, I know, when I was a girl—have had it to do ever since. It distresses me about Miss John; she won't get up early, do all I can. I've talked an' talked an' talked to her about it, but she won't. Get all sallow sleepin' till nigh sun up? of course." And the old lady seemed really distressed. John was not an ethereal nymph; like every other merely human being, she had her faults. And this was one of them—she did not rise habitually before the dawn.

"And then her drawers!" continued Mrs. General Likens; "they really grieve me. I'm speaking in confidence to a friend now, you know; of course you won't mention it in Hoppelton," said the old lady, looking at her guest while she knitted evenly on. "They are large enough, I'm sure, and she's got plenty of them; but she won't keep them in what *I* call order, now. A good deal at sixes and sevens. And she's as neat as can be about her person, too. It must be Mrs. Wall was such an invalid all the time. Or because that Miss Laura Wall is so extra neat in all her ways—old maids always are—she kept things neat after her. Ah well! we can't expect perfection. An' she isn't fond of knittin' nor darnin' nor quiltin'!"

Imperfection again. By no means the Rosa Matilda of romance—flesh and blood, and not at all faultless.

“But that isn’t to compare with using snuff, in my opinion. Do you think Mr. Wall, now—the uncle, I mean—would object if they knew it? You see,” the old lady explains, “it’s true she lives in our house, an’ we think the world of her; but whether we can take any authority over her is the question.”

Mrs. General Likens must have been—in fact, she was—a terrible lassie in her teens. The General could bear witness to that fact—a nice time he had of it during his courtship.

“Will Miss John return this evening?” Burleson asks at last, with some affectation of indifference.

“Back this evening?” the old lady pauses in her knitting to weigh the probabilities. “Well, maybe so. I didn’t ask her. Araminty will keep her if she can.”

“And how does she succeed in teaching?” asked Burleson at length, not by any means as cheerful as when he entered the house.

“Ah! what could one expect?” replies Mrs. General Likens, sorrowfully. “I gave her fair notice before she came. ‘Child,’ says I, ‘why, your voice ’ll get cracked with scolding, an’ your eyes ’ll get red with cryin’ o’ nights, an’ your hands ’ll get hard with slappin’.’ I told her *then* she’d ruin all her good looks. ‘It’ll break you so in one session you’ll be an old maid for the rest of your days, child, certain sure,’ I said. She didn’t believe me; perhaps,” added the old lady, with ominous emphasis, “she has learned since whether or no I was right.”

“And she has found it as unpleasant as you described?” asked Burleson, almost as miserable as Mrs. Likens was endeavoring to make him.

“Why, Mr. Burleson!” exclaims the old lady. “Of

course you know, every body knows, what teachin' is in the South. Josiah Evers—he tried it here once, poor fellow—says they manage it dif'rent at the North where he was raised. It's to be hoped they do! If you please the children, that is, let them have their own way in school, they'll all run over you torectly—won't learn a single thing. Their parents 'll say it's no use sending, teacher ain't worth any thing, an' so that 'll break up your school. If you try to make the children mind—a thing they never began to do at home—an' whip, you'll have to fight to see which is the strongest. Suppose you conquer? they'll go home, tell their Pa's and Ma's you almost killed them, an' that 'll break up your school. Even if none of that happens, an' you slave through the session, worried to death from morning till night, come to collect what is due you, it's about the hardest work you ever undertook in *your* life. School-bills and minister's salary is about the very last people like to pay. Even if you are the best teacher in the world, they are sure to get tired of you by the end o' one year at longest. You know how it is in this country—people like to be changin' their doctor, and changin' their preacher, and changin' their teacher all the time. I've seen enough of it in my days," says Mrs. General Likens, knitting furiously in her earnestness—"preacher has a hard enough time of it, goodness knows, but teacher's is hardest. I'd rather scrub floors, I'd rather maul rails, I'd rather do any thing in this world for a livin' than teach school! Never knew a teacher yet didn't hate teachin'!" and Mrs. General Likens only told the honest truth of that section. It was largely on this account that all her friends had so opposed John in her undertaking, nor would she have entered upon it had there been any other possible pursuit open before her. She regarded it as a martyrdom, and deliberately entered upon it as such.

As it was, his hostess succeeded perfectly in making her visitor unhappy. Was Mrs. General Likens really so profound a tactician? Did she indeed remember that pity is near akin to love? And was she endeavoring to rouse the first feeling in the lover's bosom to its deepest depth that his love might be quickened? Who knows?

But Mrs. General Likens forgets that her guest is a lawyer in embryo. As such, taking up a vague idea that the lady of the house is hostile to his intentions upon her fair inmate, he determines by a bold move to win her over. Gradually he changes the conversation from John altogether. He compliments her upon the pleasant situation of the farm, upon the fatness of the cows down the lane; he envies her her bees; he alludes to the excellence of her free-stone well water, declares he must really take a third drink out of the nice gourd: "We don't have such water as this in Hoppleton, Madam." But no impression is made; he is lawyer enough to know it. He glances desperately around—"A noble orchard, Madam!"

"Only tollable," is the cold reply.

Would it do to venture on her yarn? "I wonder if it will be possible, Madam, to get you to sell me a few hanks of that yarn?" he asks after a while. "I could not make my sister a more acceptable present; she has searched all the stores in Hoppleton in vain—there is none worth any thing to be had. Is it possible you spun it yourself?" handling the same admiringly. It is an awful falsehood. His sister never knit a stocking in her life—abhorred it as having some indefinable connection with gray hairs, spectacles, and a single life. He sees that he has touched Mrs. General Likens a good deal more than she shows, for she is perfectly aware of his manœuvres. But he has not struck the right string yet. He reflects a moment. Exactly! he has it at last!

“But I stopped on purpose to speak about one thing with you, Madam,” he says, drawing a little nearer, throwing truth utterly to the winds, and speaking seriously. “I am glad no one else is here, and I must speak before we are interrupted. It is a delicate matter, Madam. I know that persons gifted in that way are peculiarly unwilling even to be justly praised—shrink, in fact, from any mention of the thing. You see, Madam, I am well acquainted with the editors of both the papers in Hoppleton, and I am anxious the world should know something of your talent. You remember that basket, Madam? I wish you could have seen us gathered around it that day when we stopped at noon! I dare say it was intended for Miss John alone. Knowing your delicacy of feeling, she hesitated some time before she would let us enjoy the treat with her. Will you permit me to say all I wish in the matter? For force of expression, for beauty of language, for copiousness—especially copiousness!—but I am afraid—”

Yes, it *was* monomania. The shrewdest old lady that ever lived—it must have been insanity, or she would have seen through it, admirably well as the unprincipled young lawyer acted his part. As it was, she was taken as a bird in the snare of the fowler. She even forgot the existence of any motive to prompt him thus to flatter. Yes—Walpole was right. All you have to do is to discover the *kind* of coin which will buy up a person body and soul! Mrs. General Likens had this, at least, in common with Homer and Milton—she too was blind.

“But, if it is not a secret of your wonderful gift,” said Burleson, at last, after hearing the much she had to say, after listening to several poems of her writing, with, in every sense of the word, the most painful attention, “how do you manage, my dear Madam, to compose?”

“Blank verse, you mean?” asked his hostess, unhinged additionally in mind by excess of delight, and whose whole heart was open to the tempter. “Why, I take a quire of foolscap—foolscap for blank verse always—begin at the top of the page, and write straight on till my fingers get too tired, or till the General just up an’ *insists* on my comin’ to bed. You see I only write at night.”

“And how about the rhyme?”

“I take letter-paper to that. You would think to find words to rhyme together would make hard work. But it don’t. Besides, in finding the word to rhyme, it brings its own idea with it, and so helps amazin’ly. Here’s this poem I’ve just read to you about that Ishmael Spang’s to-do up here at our church. I took this quire of letter-paper that night, set down after the General was in bed, dipped my pen in the ink, an’ wrote, without stoppin’ a moment to think, this first line:

“ ‘For pious folks to fight an’ quarrel—’

Now for something to rhyme to quarrel. Here’s the way I always do: begin at the first of the alphabet an’ run down—borral, corral, dorral, forral, gorral, horral, jorral, korral, moral—Stop, I says, moral? Let me see; yes, an’ *immoral*; that rhymes pat. Now see how the rhymin’ word brings its own idea with it. Immoral! yes:

“ ‘For pious folks to fight an’ quarrel,
It is exceedin’ly immoral.’

See?”

Burleson nods his head in dumb assent. He does not dare to raise his eyes or open his lips.

“Now next,” continues the beloved of the Muses, with almost Sapphic frenzy, “I write down this next line without stopping a minute to think what is to come after it—rises like water in a well:

“ ‘With staff he has to guide his tread’—

What is to rhyme to tread? When I wrote it I had no more notion than you have this minute. It *comes* to me!" adds the pythoress, touching her finger to her brow with awful meaning. "Tread? tread? Now you'd suppose I'd begin at top of the alphabet as I did before—bred, cred, dred, and so on down. No; you see I must have variety. It's that gives a sparkle like to poetry. I'll tell you: every other time I begin at the *bottom* of the alphabet an' go up. Now here I've got to find a rhyme to Tread, Tread? Lemme see—zed, yed, wed, ved, ted, sted—sted? Ah yes! there it is—instead, instead! An' see how the word brings its own help with it—its own particular idea—an' I write it under the other in a flash. Then both lines read:

“ ‘With staff he has to guide his tread
Each knocks his neighbor down instead.’

See?"

In the fullness of her soul there is no imagining when the poetess will stop. Burleson has already made repeated efforts to this end: they were but straws tossed instantly aside in the rush of the waters of Helicon. Like the magician in the story, he has raised the demon—how to lay it is altogether beyond his might. He is becoming alarmed. The exertion is beyond his strength. Glad sounds to his ear—the wheels of a vehicle approaching! Mrs. General Likens hears them too. Instantly the poetic fire pales on her brow, stern common-sense is about to resume its inexorable sway.

"I see we are goin' to be interrupted," she says, with profoundest regret, as she gathers the precious MS. together. "It's *always* so! Never mind—we've had a few pleasant minutes any how"—two hours nearly by Burleson's watch. "We won't let you off till Monday any way. I've got ever so many pieces are entirely suitable for the

Sabbath. I'll read them all to you some time to-morrow !”

“ If you do, it will be because my horse founders to-night, or whirlwinds wreck my buggy,” thinks Burleson, while he utters only his ardent thanks, and, as Mrs. General Likens proceeds to replace her treasures in the dark closet under the stairs, Burleson stands in the doorway of the piazza to greet the arrival. The General assists his fair passenger from out the Jersey wagon. There is no step, and the General has almost to take her out in his sturdy arms. Burleson hastens to his aid. It is many weeks since he has seen her ; he wonders. The young lady takes off her sun-bonnet as she enters the gate. Lawyer as he is, he can not conceal his astonishment at the change wrought in her even during that short time. She is dressed somewhat more plainly than he has ever seen her before. But her face, her whole person, in fact—Burleson forgets that she was when he last saw her just at the critical turning-point from girlhood to maidenhood. She is now a lovely woman, the loveliest *he* has ever seen. Her life for the last few weeks has brought determination to her lip and purpose to her eye. There is a deeper flush of health upon her cheek, more ease and grace in her step. Burleson forgets that Mrs. General Likens has hurried away her papers and has returned expressly to watch how he will note the change in her charge. The old lady feels amply repaid for her deception practised upon him as she observes the expression of his face.

But Miss John does not color at all as much as that lady expected when she recognizes Burleson. Mrs. General Likens understands the female heart as much as any one can understand that complex mystery, and she is perplexed at John's whole manner, so calm, so self-possessed towards her “ Hopleton beau,” as Mrs. General Likens des-

ignated him to herself, and to a great many besides in the neighborhood. John is truly glad to see him. Seems too much so, frankly and unaffectedly, Burleson fears, for any other and deeper feeling. Yes, she is glad to see him, sits down immediately, bonnet in hand, and questions him about Mr. Wall's family, about Bug and Anna and all the rest. Her clear guileless eyes are never averted, there is no confusion, no little tremor of manner, not the least, or only the least, hurry or nervousness. Mrs. General Likens is Burleson's devoted friend and ally, and she does not like it, is almost angry with John.

The General returns from the stable soon, is glad to see Burleson, adds his entreaties to those of his wife—and of John, too—Burleson does not like that at all—that he will remain all night. Burleson has come all the way from Hoppleton for that sole and express purpose, and, therefore, he requires a great deal more persuasion. He consents at last.

Supper arrives in due time, family prayers afterwards. At this last the General asks Burleson to lead in prayer—the General invariably reads the Bible at family worship himself, it is his inalienable prerogative as the patriarch of the household, whoever else may be there. Burleson declines.

“Not a religious man?” asks the General, gravely. Burleson is compelled to reply in the negative. “I am truly sorry to know it,” says the General, in slow, serious tones, and himself leads in prayer, in the course of which he makes special supplication for his young guest.

“You notice? I don't like it, child,” says his wife to John, whom she accompanies to her chamber at the hour of retirement. The two hours between supper and bed having been utterly wasted—in Burleson's opinion—in such conversation with John as the presence of the old

people allowed. "The General is changin', getting so much more serious like, just the way James did before he died!" She had come into the room with John to say something for Burleson, but this new and painful idea has taken possession of her. "That dreadful chest complaint, child. The Lord forbid! You must pray for us, child, it would kill me—dead," and she kisses John on the cheek, and goes down stairs with a slow, heavy step.

She is as cheerful as ever the next morning at breakfast. It is one of John's special Sabbath mornings; bright and clear as if Nature, too, remembered the event it commemorated and smiled with gladness in the recollection. And John looks lovelier than the day before. In fact, she always does on Sabbath. And it is not in the Sabbath toilette either. Nothing can be plainer than that. It is the subdued gladness of eye and lip, the softened modulation of tone and motion, the repose of manner of a soul enjoying the holy rest. The very trials of her new occupation—and they have been very near as dark as Mrs. General Likens painted them—have only brought her piety into more active exercise. She has been driven only so much the nearer to her Saviour, and is grateful, unconsciously though it be, for all that has driven her there. And who does not know that all intimate friends come to resemble each other, and in proportion to their intimacy? Her entire religion being simply a personal friendship with One—if Mr. Josiah Evers can excuse her—whom she regards as her wisest, ablest, nearest, dearest friend!

To Burleson it is Sunday; exactly that much—no more. He drives John to church in his buggy. He has been treasuring up his interview with their hostess; he details it to John with glee. It is not in human nature not to be amused; but Mrs. General Likens is their friend, of whose unsuspecting hospitality he is freely partaking. It

was a deception, too, he had practised upon her, which has to John an unpleasant aspect. If her companion is so adroit and prompt in this, may he not be as prompt, as adroit, as successful, too, in other deceptions—many other deceptions in other matters—any other—all other, when an end is to be gained? All this she feels rather than actually thinks, and he seems so utterly destitute of suspicion that he has done any thing to which the least objection can be made. Is it the Sabbath atmosphere around and within her which causes his conversation in some way to jar a little on her ear? She is no ascetic Puritan—no sourness in her simple piety; she does not stop to reason much on the matter as she rides and listens, but she does not *feel* with him.

And, on the return ride, she can not but agree that Mr. Merkes is open to severe criticism. She can not refrain from laughing at Burleson's criticisms. But Mr. Merkes is a preacher of the Gospel, too; it was the worship of God he was conducting; it is the Sabbath afternoon through whose lengthening shades they are driving home. Burleson is a frank and handsome and genial gentleman as ever lady desired to see. He has driven, as she well knows, all the way from Hoppleton to enjoy her society a few hours to-day; a companion more talented, brilliant in conversation—so handsome, too—she has never known. Nor any stain upon his character—and yet? What is his lack? Something very great, but what? And the very trees through which they ride not more indifferent to, absolutely unconscious of, those things which interest her most. No deception in him here; he seems unaware of the existence, even, of all things or persons except those in grasp or sight or hearing! Unconsciously she is losing interest in him as she knows him better, and he is sensible of this. Yet it has effect the reverse of offending him. It

awakens in him a sense vague yet bitter of something wrong, rather of some great lack in himself, accompanied by increased sense of her elevation above him, substantial value over him, with ever deepening love for her for that very account. His love for her begets, too, a strange contempt for himself. Both emotions on the increase, becoming only the more reckless as they grow.

“Reckless!” His father is repeating it to himself, religious paper lying on his knee, as he thinks it over, his head in his bosom. “Yes, reckless—I know of no other word—and it lies in the heart; more so than when he came home; more so every day. No purpose, no conception of a purpose in life! Even Nan, here, has—poor thing!—a set purpose in life: to get married. Even if it was money only, or distinction at the bar. I would be willing, even, to see him go into politics—dirty puddle! He might, at least, have the purpose of gratifying his mother and myself!”

And the banker puzzles painfully over the matter, as the most complex by far of all the business affairs which have ever come before him as yet.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Enthronement of a King!

“**D**EAD? You mean only very sick! You can’t mean *dead*!” Yes, dead—actually dead! How the tidings fly, like living winged things, this Monday morning!

The children playing along the road on their way to school, or, truants therefrom, rambling through the woods, fishing at far-off pools, catch the swift and startling tidings as if from the air, halt, horror-struck, a moment, and then run every step of the way home to burst breathless into the house.

“Oh, Ma! Oh, Pa! Dead! Likens! General! General Likens! Dead!”

Black Scip, ploughing in the field steadily along with incessant “Gee!” and “Haw!” and “Come here, Brandy!” calculating, as he trudges along with uneven feet on unbroken ground and broken furrow, up and down, how long it is before “sundown;” what are the chances of the possum hunt to-night, nor dreaming as yet of emancipation by five hundred years, though the same is but some six years or so off—black Scip halts suddenly. His furrow runs along the fence, and some “boy,” galloping for life upon the road, yells to him the sudden news, and is gone.

“What you say? General *Likens*? Lor a massy! Dead! *Who-a-o* Buck!”

In five minutes every hand in the field has left his or her plough, and is beside Scip on the spot where the lightning struck! The overseer is seated on the fence above them,

the negroes wondering, exclaiming, ejaculating, scarcely above their breaths, though. Five minutes before, the overseer was yelling and cursing at the hands here, there, all over the field at the same time; now none so silent as he; for he knew the General, the General knew him, well—and he is thinking of that last talk they had together.

“There, there, boys! That’ll do! Work must be did whoever’s dead!” he says, at last; but it is half an hour before he says it, and in very mild tones. And so each hand goes slowly back to the plough with other thoughts, as the mould opens to the ploughshare before their feet again. The possum hunt is abandoned for to-night. The very calling to oxen and mule as they plough sounding to their own ears like swearing almost; for Sunday has suddenly come down upon the field, and it seems almost wicked to work.

Late in the afternoon the body is laid, duly covered with the snowiest of linen, upon a lounge in the centre of the best room. Uncle Simeon is seated at the side ever since it was laid there, leaning heavily on his old staff, and looking fixedly and without a tear at the cold, set face.

“An’ you is dar! ’Fore me! Dar! Gone, an’ dar’fore me! Act’ly *dar*!” He repeats it over and over again very often, regarding nothing else in the world.

Let us go back a little. It was upon the household assembled that Monday morning the event fell—out of all possible occupations assembled for family worship. The General had taken his seat as usual in his arm-chair, his wife placing the little work-table, with its cover and fringe of cotton, upon which lay the large family Bible, beside him, as she had done morning and evening for many a long year. As he had never failed at family worship to do, the General places his hands, clasped together, upon the Bible lying opened before him, bows his head reverently and

with closed eyes, and begins his brief petition—going always before the reading—“Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous—”

A hesitation in the words, a sudden raising of the hands, still locked together, to the breast, a labored, indescribable gasp, and the General has fallen to one side in his large chair, whose arms support him from falling to the floor. Dead. A curious ashen hue over his face—dead.

There follows around him, lying perfectly still in the centre of it all, the rush of all there, the cries of surprise, the shrieks of anguish. Caught up from the group gathered in terror around the body—the wife nearest to it, but most silent of all—the tidings fly from house to kitchen, from kitchen to cabin, from cabin to stable, from stable to field abroad, and so over the whole neighborhood, and on, in time, to the farthest individual that ever heard of the General. There is a galloping off after the doctor of negro after negro as fast as one horse after another can be saddled for the purpose: whip and shout applied with immeasurably more energy than if it was for their own father, brother, wife, child. There is a wild throwing open of pantry-doors, a tearing out of drawers in search of remedies, a running of persons against each other. Amidst all the noise the General has fallen a little forward in his chair, silent forever: amidst all the confusion and bewilderment he has entered, wondering, upon the realm of perfect and perpetual peace.

If Robert Wall had spoken out all his daily mind they would have put him in the mad-house long before they did; nor is Mr. Wall free from many a thought which would have made people stare if uttered. For months, as an instance, he has, somehow, identified the General with Alfred the Great, shaping his bow for war elsewhere, while the cakes burn neglected on the hearth, neglectful, even,

of the noisy housewife thereat. The foolish fancy seems to him less foolish just at this instant.

The young minister, having done all else that he could, was about to offer some consolation—with a sense of infinite awkwardness, too—to the smitten wife, clinging so silently about her husband's knees; but John, pale and weeping and quiet, with hand on his arm, whispers him, "Not now, please, not now!" and comforts the wife most by quieting the confusion, and then having the body laid, with silent beckon and motion of command to the servants, upon the bed. It is hours after, when the doctor has come and gone, when all know that the master of the house is indeed dead, before John, sitting beside Mrs. General Likens, lying, exhausted, upon her bed, ventures to whisper words of consolation.

"Don't be afraid for me, child," says Mrs. General Likens; and she rises instantly and sits up in bed. "Haven't I been expectin' it all along? An' I ain't been prayin' for grace to help in time of need all this time, mornin' and night, for nothin', I hope. It was only the first clap, you know. He was ready an' waitin.' I jest laid down a minute to rest a little. Don't fear me; I'm strong; I'll bear up!" and she persists in getting off the bed, bathes her eyes, smooths her hair, arranges her cap, and moves about, overseeing and directing all that is going on—very old, though.

"Never is a time a mistress is needed so all around," she says, hours after, to John, who has refrained from expostulation, only followed with anxious look her tall, active figure as it moves about with restless energy, the tears in John's eyes and a vague dread in John's heart. "Must be after the black ones all the time; they mean well, but don't know how," she explains to John, sitting down for a moment beside her and rising up again instantly. It seems

to John as if the mistress of the house dare not stop an instant on some account. And then, hair and complexion and manner, she is suddenly ten years older than when they sat down to breakfast that morning, the General apparently never better in his life—Mrs. General Likens certainly never more talkative. And yet the servants are almost troublesome in their officious zeal. They anticipate every wish, keeping wistful eyes upon her: start forward to obey as she opens her mouth to speak; are off on her errand with a “Yes, Missis—yes, Missis,” before the order is well out of her lips. Moll, the house-girl, late that night, lingers uneasily around the table in the kitchen at which the cook is making up her bread for the next morning’s breakfast.

“I don’t like about ole missis,” she ventures at last; “’pears to me—What *you* think, mammy?” The old cook has carefully refrained from lifting her eyes from her dough, and now replies, roughly,

“Don’t stan’ dar foolin’ round me, gal!” and immediately thereafter sinks back in her seat with an “Oh my Hebenly Massa!” and a paroxysm of weeping.

The next day is Tuesday, and as the hour of the funeral services approaches all the children of the neighborhood come flocking in. General Likens has been to them from their births a part of nature itself. General Likens *dead*? It is as if the universe was tumbling down! They can not comprehend it. On their first arrival no earthly inducement can get them into the room, the best in the house and opening upon the porch, in which the General lies in his coffin, supported at each end upon a hide-bottomed chair. They steal cautiously to the door and look in, grouped together and holding by each other with breathless awe. By-and-by they steal in one by one, stand beside Uncle Simeon seated beside the coffin, and holding firmly to him and to each other as they do so, they gaze

fearfully upon the cold, calm face. Not for millions would they dare touch, however, the brown hands clasped upon the broad bosom—hands yesterday so familiar, to-day so terrible in their waxen coldness. And so they get used to it all, and finally have to be checked by parents and friends, as they forget all about the dead and frolic noisily, waiting for service to begin, around the house and over the yard.

The company pours steadily in, upon horseback, and in all manner of wagons and carriages; evidently all the Likens neighborhood will be there by eleven. Brown Bob Long had been at the house since noon yesterday; is the first to arrive to-day. And he is grave, but with a singular elation in his manner too, almost joy, as if a fortune had fallen to the General. Arrayed like all these, in his best clothes, Isham, the black theologian, idles among the groups of negroes gathered from all the plantations around, conscious of being their host. He is so far recovered from the shock of the death as, in intervals from carrying chairs hither and thither, and assisting to tie the ever-arriving horses, to deny and dispute every statement of a religious nature put forth by any one of his sable friends.

“Ef yonder ain’t them Meggar folks!” ejaculates one of these, in reference to a party on horseback coming up the lane.

The statement is promptly scouted by Isham, but is true none the less. Old Mrs. Meggar has come with them on horseback, and precedes the rest into the house. The others fasten their horses outside the fence, taking much more time for the same than is necessary. For Isham has remarked from the first:

“Ketch me fastenin’ their critters for such trash as the Meggars! Not ’less old massa was to come back from hebben to tell me!”

But they come into the gate at last, with Doc. Meggar in the lead. A delegation of sixteen dogs, Thunder in advance, accompanies them; or, to be sternly accurate, fifteen and four-sixths, three of the four-sixths being the dog lamed in the bear-fight, who uses now only three of his legs; the remaining sixth being the fice, off of duty at home and deprived thus of his bark. With the other dogs Zed and Toad come, and very much as if with their tails between their legs, after the Meggar boys to the gate, but stop there, produce knives simultaneously from their pockets, split each a good splinter off the palings, and begin whittling. They are out of their element, and curse guardedly and under their breaths, hats down over their eyes.

"S'pose he *is* dead. I never said he wasn't!" Zed complains in continuation to Toady. "He isn't *my* daddy, is he? I want to know!" and his splinter is assuming under his knife the shape of a coffin.

"An' such a day for a hunt!" acquiesces his companion. "Oh no! mighty pious, to be sure! legs in trowsers like candle-moulds, a feller's collar a-sawin' away under his ears. It's gettin' to be a leetle more'n *I* can stand myself!" and his remarks thereupon are not exactly of the nature of a mass for the repose of him who lies shrouded within.

"You hear Doc. try the old man?" remarks Toad again, after a silence, whittling nearer his companion and farther from the gate, as the company still continues to arrive.

"To get *him* to come?" answers Zed, with an oath.

"Not straight out, you know; he hinted round," said Toady, with half a dozen curses. And that was a peculiarity of the Meggar family, that hinting round. Very rarely, indeed, did any one under that roof ask a direct question of, or make any direct remark, unless it was a

curse, to any other there. This would involve their looking each other straight in the eyes while they spoke—a thing habitually avoided by them even in the heat of quarrel. Old Mrs. Meggar only asked direct questions, made remarks aimed at some one person under her roof, looking in the eyes of the person she addressed as she spoke; but she was a disagreeable exception to the general rule—a sort of incarnate conscience in the centre of the family on that account.

“Yes, Doc. he hinted round an’ round the old man like a bumble-bee, comin’ closer an’ closer ev’ry time,” said Toad, who had himself not seen his companion’s eyes in his life except furtively.

“And what *did* that old cuss say?” inquires Zed.

“He was a-smokin’ by the fire; ‘Ketch me goin’ to funerals,’ says he. Old ’oman was a-knittin’ in the corner,” continues Toad. ‘Soul?’ the old man says, says he, ‘Ha’n’t got any. Spit it away in tobacco juice; puffed it away in tobacco smoke; drowned it out in whisky; cussed it to pieces long ago.’ An’ he up an’ slams on his breast with his hand. ‘Hollow!’ says he, ‘hempty!’ Old ’oman she was cryin’ softly; when he says that, she ups an’ out.”

“Breaks for the butter-beans,” remarks Zed, and very correctly.

“Ha’n’t been no fun sence that bar-fight,” continues Toad, at last. “General Likens *he* comes over—*glad* he’s gone; Brown Bob *he* sits an’ talks; that young parson act’ly hes his praarrs in the house! Goin’ to preachin’, too, ev’ry Sunday; old ’oman on old gray, or in the wagon; we a-followin’ behind.”

“An’ Doc., he tryin’ to ease off from swearin’.” Zed continues the catalogue of grievances: “A fellar that could swear the bark off a black-jack too—*he* tryin’ to

give up swearin'!" The thought is painful to both in the extreme.

"Did my best, too, to stop it," complains Toad; "his givin' it up. Crossed and bothered him more'n I ever dar to do before. You see I thought Doc. he'd blaze out at me like he used to; get in the way again so."

"Not a curse at las'. Only got knocked down for your pains," observes Zed, moodily.

"But, I say, look here," says Toad, after some silent whittling, under the temporary influence, probably, of the funeral and of the many solemn faces grouped around and arriving every moment, and as if by a desperate effort, "S'pose a fellar turns out he *hes* got a soul somewhere among his in'ards—and s'pose there *is* a God—" But his conjectures are broken by the indignant oaths of his disgusted friend, who trembles inwardly with even greater apprehension himself.

By this time the young minister, standing beside the body in its coffin, has begun the funeral services. The room is filled. So is the piazza in front. The negroes crowd a back room, peering in at the open door, sending in their voices to swell the funeral psalm. No one thinks of disturbing Uncle Simeon in his seat by the coffin.

"An' you is *dar*, Massa, along Mass James, act'ly *dar*!" the old man has been still murmuring to himself in lower and lower tones as if falling asleep, regardless of those around. But it is Mrs. General Likens who attracts the most attention. She sits beside John clasping firmly her hand, calm by a fixed effort. No one there, however, but notices the features how they have suddenly sharpened; the hair, too, whitened in the last few hours: she seems to have indeed rapidly become old, very old!

"Thank you. I was expectin' it, you see," she has remarked to every attempt at consolation from the multi-

tude of friends assembled about her. "No, you needn't fear me. I'll bear up. We *have* been long together, but I was expectin' it!" And she repeats it to every one, as if mechanically. "Thank you! Needn't fear me. I'm strong. Expectin' it, you see!" And so the funeral services go on about the sleeper lying in his coffin, but with uncovered face, in the midst—so calm, so natural! The dead countenance is but that of a very plain Christian planter; yet it strikes Charles Wall, as he gazes upon it, what breadth there is of brow, and curve of chin and lip and regal dignity of aspect—wonderfully like, in the marble of death, to busts he has seen of Roman emperors; an unspeakable exaltation and grandeur in the set face, as of one entered on rule in a sublimer world! The old foolish thought of Alfred and his bow forces itself again upon him: for are there not trophies here of that bow?

Since the service began, old Mrs. Meggar, utterly forgetting the dead, has changed her seat in the crowded room, so that she can see the living—her sons! Happy tears flow for them as she sees them enter the room. All have come—Doc., Bill, Jake—under a force which they would gladly have resisted if they could. At first they lingered on the outskirts, but now they stand as near the coffin as any, neatly dressed, solemn, and thoroughly alarmed. The neighbors wonder even there, and nudge each other to observe them. After the second verse Doc. even endeavors to join in singing, for the lines are given out. His brothers glance up with surprise, note the calm, firm expression of his face, and look down again more alarmed than ever. Doc. sees nothing but the peaceful face of the dead; has reached the full climax of his new purpose in life; neither thinks nor cares for any thing else.

It may be mere accident that Brown Bob Long stands beside Doc.—mere accident. However that may be, the

tears are running undisguisedly down his rough beard as he hears Doc.'s murmured attempts at melody. And it is rather a wonder than not that Doc. can stand there so composed, for Brown Bob has managed to get his hand as it hangs by his side in his own, and the squeeze is unlimited, yet Doc. is hardly aware of the presence of Bob in the room.

"Mighty to save," Bob whispers, hours after this, to the young minister after the grave has been filled up. "You look at it in the Hebrew when you get home—it's Isaiah, sixty-third—*mighty* to save—the mightiest sort of mighty, the Hebrew makes it! I dug it out to the roots with my Lexicon las' night. The *save*, too, *Yahoshea* it is, *Joshua*, you know, an' *Jesus*! An' that text you spoke from over the body at the house—our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death—you oughter 'a told the people about that word abolished. It's *katargesantos*—*kata* by itself means, you know, dead against, upsettin', destroyin'. Then there's the rest of the word, *argesantos*—the *alpha* is privative, you know, dead against. Again, *ergon*, "a work"—that is, death, which is the devil's work! What an amazing strong expression it is! Christ hath completely, utterly, entirely undone, destroyed, annihilated death! Yes, abolished is good English for it if a man only knows how *strong* the *abolished* is!" and Mr. Long has the earnestness of a discoverer.

But that was afterwards, when they had laid the General to sleep near the little old church in the woods, close beside James. While the friends are yet around the open coffin in the house, the young pastor dwells in plainest language upon the simple facts of salvation for every one else there, as for the General, by the same Saviour, and his words evidently sink deep into a good soil, for it is soft with tears.

Uncle Simeon leans more and more heavily upon his staff beside his old master. He is very old and feeble. As the minister proceeds his forehead rests upon the edge of the coffin, nothing visible but his white head and bowed shoulders. All respect and love Uncle Simeon; next to the wife no one has a better right to be so near the dead. But he will not move when they come at last to put on the lid of the coffin. Brown Bob lays his hand kindly on his shoulder, stoops to speak to him, looks around with an exclamation—Uncle Simeon is gone after his master! The grief of the negroes before was loud and clamorous; it is awed now almost into silence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In which Mr. Merkes is cruelly treated.

HOPPLETON hears a faint rumor one morning, and smiles at the same as a pleasant absurdity. Hoppleton hears next day a repeated rumor to the same effect, and pshaws it as a good enough joke at first, but worn out. The day after, Hoppleton hears the same nonsense in stronger tones than ever before. Hoppleton now learns, on the best authority, that the thing is perfectly certain, and instantly asserts that it always knew it was to be.

“It’s just like her,” says the feminine part of the town.—“But how in the mischief did Mr. Burleson senior and Mr. Burleson junior come to permit it?” asks the masculine part of Hoppleton.—“You’d better ask how *Mrs.* Burleson could come to say Yes!” says the feminine part again. “But, as to Anna Burleson, it’s just like her—we are not astonished in the least!” although they all were—the ladies, at least, exceedingly so. After the first blow, however, they were not astonished either. They knew the mystic machinery going on under their own necklaces well enough, at least, to know that no one should reasonably be astonished at any thing their sex may do. Two parties formed among the ladies of Hoppleton on the spot. The age of about twenty was the dividing line of the parties.

“Anna Burleson is raving crazy!” said all the sex under twenty and unmarried.

“Better than be an old maid,” replies all the sex over twenty and married.

“But the man is so *poor*!” rejoins the first party.

“Better *him* than live an old maid,” answers the second party.

“But the man has got eight or ten children!”

“Better them than none at all. And it ain’t ten; its only six or seven. If it was fifty, better that than be an old maid!”

“And cross! Gracious! And lean, and dry, and sour!—as lief marry a crab-tree!”

“No you wouldn’t. Better him, if he was a vinegar-cruet on legs, than no man at all.”

“Do you think *we* would be such fools as Anna Burleson?”

“In her case, yes.”

“Do we understand you to say we—would—under—any—set—of circumstances—marry—such—a—man—as that?” demand those of the other faction who are nearest twenty—say twenty-five—weighing out the words one by one in the scales of indignation.

“There’s no danger of *your* being placed in such a situation,” says the wiser party, with a smile of propitiation. “But if you were—yes! If you were Anna Burleson, in Anna Burleson’s situation, you would act, of course, exactly as Anna Burleson is acting. We tell you what, girls,” continued the more experienced ladies, “it’s very easy to say *I* wouldn’t do so and so—*I* wouldn’t! Mighty easy to talk. But the fact is, almost *any* husband is better than no husband.”

“You forget Laura Wall!” exclaim the defeated side, rallying an instant.

“Yes, if you had Laura Wall’s piety and sweetness it would be different. But Laura is one in ten thousand.

None of you girls are as good as she is, and you know it well enough."

"My wonder," says one of the younger misses, after a while, "is that Ed. Burleson didn't pull his nose, if he is a minister, when he first proposed such a thing!"

"Don't you believe it!" says the older of the sex, with aspect of profound experience.

"By-the-by, who is that Ed. Burleson going to marry?" inquire three Misses in a breath.

"You silly creatures!" six others of their own age make answer. "Loo Mills, of course. Isn't he with her all the time?"

"You are wrong, girls," says the older party, strong from recent victory. "Ed. Burleson is *not* going to marry Loo Mills."

"Who is he going to marry, then?" exclaim the others somewhat relieved.

"If we tell you, mind, you must not tell a soul," reply the other side, sinking its voice. "We have it as a *secret*. He is going to marry John—that sweet little John Easton that used to live at Mr. Wall's."

"How do you know?" is the prompt question, after the "Law me's!" are over, and the uplifted hands dropped.

"He addressed her before she left, if you *must* know," says the wisdom in the circle. "He went out to a country neighborhood once—some miserable little place she was visiting—and drove her home in his buggy. Besides, Bug knows. She managed to go with him once—got into his trunk or something. We coaxed it all out of her one day. And he's been there dozens of times since."

"Been where?"

"Oh, that neighborhood, whatever they call it, where John is teaching. You mustn't repeat it, girls. She'll soon be Mrs. Burleson the younger, living in Hoppleton,

driving in a handsome carriage, wearing finer dresses than any of us. But it does look artful in her. It was a great temptation though—he is so rich, she so poor.”

“Oh no, you mustn’t say that of John. There never was such an artless, quiet little thing!” exclaim the other side; but they believe the worst of her too.

“Just to think!” they afterwards remark quite frequently to themselves, and to their parents, and every body.

“Who is it was saying he was getting so dissipated?” inquire the older ladies. “Somebody ought to tell John.”

“He’s such a provoking creature, I can’t endure him; teases one so,” says the young lady present whom Burleson has visited least of any there.

“Handsome, talented fellow; pity he should dissipate!” says the wisdom again, with sincere regret.

“Handsome!” say the other party, with a little scream; “and talented! We never knew it before!” His being engaged to John has suddenly sunk Burleson in their esteem very low indeed.

“Ah, well, any of you girls would be glad to marry him!” is the candid reply—which is rejected, however, with the scorn it deserves.

“And you are so wise,” say the junior ladies at last, “perhaps you can tell us who Loo Mills is going to marry?”

“Certainly, *I* can,” says the oldest and wisest of the other side.

“You certainly don’t believe that story of her being engaged to that nephew of Mr. Wall’s?” scream all the rest in chorus. The assaulted lady nods her head with the gravity of certain assurance, and bears unshaken the denials and exclamations poured upon her.

“But how do you know?” is at last the question.

“Mrs. Wall as good as told me so,” is the reply. “*They* don’t object, bless you—not they! No wonder!”

"Law me! *I* asked Laura Wall once," volunteers one of the other ladies, "and she only said, 'Do you think they would be congenial spirits, Mrs. Brown?' That's all I could get out of Laura."

"But do somebody tell me," breaks in another lady, small of size and therefore specially inquisitive, "how in this world did all this about Mr. Merkes and Anna Burleson come about. I thought Josiah Evers was the happy man."

"Law me! didn't you ever hear what passed between Ed. Burleson and him?" asks Mrs. Brown. "Ed. went out of his way to insult Josiah Evers one day. Josiah he drew himself up and said, 'You had better wait until I *ask* an alliance in your family, sir, before you become so offended at me.' There was a good many standing around, and it cut young Burleson to the bone. Sharp as a needle; bless you, Yankees always are. Burleson only cursed and walked off. Depend on it, *he* didn't oppose her having Mr. Merkes. But, still, I wonder how it *did* come about at last!"

But nobody knew. And nobody ever will know either. The father of the daughter did not know, as he drummed upon his desk with his ruler and meditated. Mrs. Burleson did not, treating the whole matter with lofty disdain. The daughter herself could not tell exactly where, or when, or how it began. In all Hoppleton no one was more astonished than Mr. Merkes himself! When he became fully aware of the fact that he was indeed to marry again, and Miss Anna Burleson at that, he grew alarmed, suspicious, nervous to the last degree. Something wrong somewhere! A conspiracy, on the part of somebody, under it all! He never could eat much; he now ceased to eat altogether. As to a good night's sleep, that was out of the question. He would have been deeply wounded had she not agreed to marry him. It was little better now that she had agreed

to. He ground the whole matter over and over and over again in his mind with a hand never off the crank of the mill, by day nor by night. There is the bearing of the father, of the mother, especially of the handsome, haughty, reckless brother—he plainly does not like it at all! Bug, too—she is extremely disagreeable to him. Even Anna herself—she seemed a noble prize when apparently out of his reach; now that he had won her he was by no means so certain; for it is a singular feature in Mr. Merkes's character, that whenever an object actually came into his hands it instantly lost all of its glitter and desirableness. He has a very poor opinion thus of his children. The fact is, he has a miserable opinion of himself, though he resents bitterly the faintest hint of the same opinion in regard to him on the part of any body else.

For Mr. Merkes teaches school in Hoppleton these days. His house is next that of poor Issells, the melancholy tailor; the front and largest room in the building being used as the school-room; and a cheerless home Mr. Merkes has of it with Samuel, Mary, Alexander, and poor little Lucy in the remaining rooms. It is dispiriting even to Mr. Mack, the jovial cabinet-maker, opposite that sepulchral home. *He* objects loudly to the amount of whipping necessary to the right training of the children thereat; of late has bits of cotton ostentatiously at hand on a shelf, as he informs his visitors, ready to stop up both ears at the first sound of the rod over the way. Even Issells comes over to tell him—Mr. Mack.

“It is horrible the way that scoundrel beats those poor children—he a *preacher* too! all preachers about alike, if the fact was known!”

* Anna Burleson, now she has promised to marry him, how Mr. Merkes grinds her in that remorseless, incessant mill within! Is she at all as good-looking as his departed wife

when he was first engaged to her? No, no, no, goes the mill. How old is she? Thirty, perhaps thirty-five; forty, perhaps forty-five; fifty, perhaps—but she can't be older than her father—one comfort. Her teeth too, grinds the mill, are they not false—are they not—are they not? And her hair—her hair? Her complexion too, false or real?—false or real? Her health too—may she not have some dreadful internal disease—may she not?—may she not? And her temper too? Here he grinds with fresh energy. Yes, he has heard this of it; yes, he has heard that of it! And won't people say I married her for her money? That is a solid something, indeed, for his mental mill, and he grinds away at it for miserable hours. Hah! and he sits bolt upright in bed when the thought drops, at midnight, into the hopper of his mill. Perhaps the bank is secretly broken; perhaps not a cent is left for the family to live upon; perhaps *that* is the reason she consented to marry me—to have me help support the family; and at this suggestion he works steadily, tossing and turning in bed the rest of the night. And so all day too—there must be *some* hidden reason, *some* concealed motive for their consenting to the match!

It is a dreadful trouble to Mr. Merkes. He can not begin to indulge in the least pleasurable view of the matter but the thought suddenly seizes him by the collar: May she not be ruinously extravagant? And he has hardly shaken that off before another idea has him more firmly by the throat: Look here, don't you *know* she and the children will live in perpetual strife? It is intolerable. He is unusually cross in school; he boxes the ears of the four at home. He even argues painfully with himself the propriety of flying the town. He looks forward with anxiety to the appointed day. He never was more miserable in his life. He wishes he had never come to Hoppleton!

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Terrible News in Town to-day, Sir !”

BUT the attention of Hopleton is diverted from Mr. Merkes's approaching marriage this cold December day with a vengeance. From before day Issells has knocked at people's doors and raved about the town like one distracted. Quite a crowd, before breakfast, are gathered in the bar-room of Moody's Hotel, listening to the tailor as, half clothed and wholly unwashed and uncombed, he unfolds his almost frenzied story.

“ You see, my wife is sick, has been for years, so that it's little sleep I get at night. I have troubles, too, plenty of them, besides that, to keep me lying wide awake. I tell you, gentlemen, I've heard it five hundred times before, have mentioned it to Mack, there—he can tell you I did. Ah, here comes Mr. Ramsey ! You say he is a good man ! he can tell you I told him fifty times in passing, that man would kill one of them poor things—”

“ Stop, Mr. Issells !” It is Mr. Ramsey that speaks, and all the group, eager listeners added to it every moment, turn to his lifted hand and well-known voice.

“ You did tell me two or three times that you believed Mr. Merkes was cross and cruel to the children. You never gave me any proof of it. We all know how bitter you are against religion, especially ministers, so I paid the less attention to what you said. Little Lucy is dead, gentlemen,” adds good Mr. Ramsey, very gravely ; “ I've been there ever since three o'clock this morning—”

"You see, he acknowledges *that*," breaks in Mr. Issells. "Yes, and as sure as you live that old scoundrel struck her the blow that killed her. I have heard him—they live next my house, you know—at least a thousand times. You see, they would occasionally wake, one or the other of them, and cry during the night; as sure as they did so he'd box their ears—the crossiest old rascal, preacher as he is! Here's Mr. Mack will tell you that he had to keep things by him to stuff in his ears, he flogged those school-children so. Not half as much as he did his own. He was afraid of their fathers and brothers. *They* were at his mercy, those pitiful little ones of his own. Cross!" and Issells, being excessively so himself, has no language to express the extent of Mr. Merkes's sin in that direction.

"Did you hear Lucy cry last night? Did you hear Mr. Merkes strike her? Be careful what you say, Mr. Issells. This matter may be in court." It is Mr. Ramsey who says it, very pale and anxious.

"When I hear him raving and raging and slapping away at his children *every* night, how can I be certain of last night exactly which child he struck?" says Issells, a little more guardedly. "I wasn't in the man's room. But I've no doubt that the old hypocrite killed that poor child."

And this is the burden of Issell's story, which he repeats round and round town all day long.

Mr. Merkes is already very generally disliked. Issell's story, increasing in terror and volume as it spreads from lip to lip, is creating a dangerous storm of feeling against him. All agree that Mr. Merkes is just the man to do it—not intentionally, but in a rage, not knowing how hard he strikes. If it was one of his scholars only it would be bad enough, but one of his own children—no mother, even, to defend them, and a poor miserable little girl too!

The feeling against Mr. Merkes is growing more danger-

ous to him every moment. A large crowd is collected in front of the house. But Mr. Ramsey comes over to get the cabinet-maker to make the little coffin, and Mr. Mack goes over with his tape into Mr. Merkes's house, and comes out with it festooned in his hand, and so goes to work in earnest, very sober indeed.

Hardly a lady in Hoppleton but is in and out of Mr. Merkes's all day. From dawn one lady, however, has held undisputed sway there. This was Anna Burleson. From the instant black Sally, sent by her mammy for the purpose, rushed into her bed-room and wakened her out of a sound sleep with the news, she has been another woman for life. Not waiting to consult father or mother, she has hurried over to Mr. Merkes's, and no one does other than aid her in reference to the poor little body being prepared for the grave. Only this she has whispered to the wretched father, white, hollow-eyed, shrivelled with an ague, as it were, by the school-room stove, in which some one has made a hasty fire—only this:

“Be a man, Mr. Merkes. Of course it's false. Be true to yourself, and *I* will be true to you!” and so passes into the back-rooms and assumes command. She works with energy and decision, has new color in her face and new light in her eyes. All her soul has needed heretofore was as object in life. She has one now.

Even in his anguish Mr. Merkes has time to ask himself, as her hand is lifted from his shoulder, Surely there must be some object, some scheme? But Mr. Wall the elder comes in at this juncture and sits beside him, and takes his hand kindly in his, and whispers long and low.

“No! As God sees me, no!” Mr. Merkes answers the whisper in a voice which startles every one. At least Laura Wall, who has come in with her father, and who has shrunk from the miserable man with horror in her eyes,

seems satisfied, and passes on into the chamber and throws her arms around Anna Burleson busy therein, and whispers to her, and bursts into loud weeping.

"I didn't think you were foolish enough, Laura, to listen to such stuff," is all that Anna has to say, putting her coolly off and going on with her work, singularly like her stately mother all at once in her manner, as all there, comparing notes in a whisper, are agreed.

Only once does she break down. Laura Wall has turned from her to the bed upon which little Lucy lies, after a rapid, curious glance at the cold, pitiful face, and falls on her knees beside it, and kisses the little brow, and weeps—all the ladies crowding the room breaking afresh into tears at the sight. Anna Burleson has sunk on the floor by her side for a moment, weeping silently, and parting the flaxen hair from the forehead of the dead child with lingering fingers, as if it were her own. She is soon on her feet again, seeing to it that all things needed are being attended to.

And so the ladies come and go all day, with perpetual whisperings, going out and coming hastily back for something they have forgotten, or to receive fresh instructions from Anna, whose position in that household all acknowledge henceforth and forever.

Mrs. Burleson never shows her face in the house—not even at the funeral next day. Mr. Burleson comes in only with the coroner's jury, which takes possession immediately after dinner, Edward with him.

Only a few of the multitude can get in. Clemm the blacksmith is coroner; Moody, Joe Hopple, M'Clarke, Mr. Ramsey, and others, on the jury. Anna Burleson and other ladies testify that there were no marks of violence on the body. They also testify that little Lucy has always been a frail little thing, not expected to live. From her

birth, they have heard, though *that* is ruled out as being hearsay. Then Mack the cabinet-maker is examined, but knows nothing. Issells is brought in; beyond what he has told at Moody's Hotel that morning he knows nothing. Nothing whatever can be learned from Samuel or Alexander, shrinking from sight behind their father. Mary, sitting in Anna Burleson's lap, closes any possibility of evidence on her part by quietly sinking back in a faint at the first question. The doctor testifies that the child had been a invalid from his first knowledge of her; seemed lacking in vital force; judged its mother must have been in feeble health at and for some time before its birth. And then the doctor clothes the immediate causes of its death in such learned terms as to cause a jurymen to ejaculate "No wonder it died, poor thing!"

At the close of this testimony, to the surprise of all, Edward Burleson steps quietly forward and begs to be put on oath. He says that, from his own personal observation for years, the course of life of students in the seminary at which Mr. Merkes took his diploma is such as in a large number of cases seriously to impair the health of the student. The young lawyer proceeds to depict the career of Mr. Merkes, and all like him, enfeebled in health from the beginning, after full entrance upon his profession. The peculiar strain of the duties thereof upon heart, mind, body; the mortifications and humiliations; the insufficient pay; the reasons why only in rare and desperate instances the minister can lay aside his profession, although it is wearing him rapidly to death. "Among all your acquaintance with ministers, gentlemen," he asks, "are not the majority of them invalids? As long-lived as other men, perhaps—insurance tables show that—but invalids the most of them?" he asks. And, having never thought of it, all of them, before, the jury murmur, after a little re-

flection, "That's the fact, sure enough!" He then applied all this as ample explanation of Mr. Merkes's alleged and exaggerated peevishness. If Mr. Merkes had struck his own helpless infant, which he utterly disbelieved, it was in a moment of insanity, the direct and natural result of the causes detailed. He appealed to every Christian present if one whom they had long known and respected as beyond doubt a sincerely pious minister could by any possibility have intentionally injured his own motherless child unless thus deranged.

It was something, at least, new to the jury, and they listened. But the speaker was a lawyer, and who shall decide how much of his statement was legal evidence, was truth and right, and how much mere quibble and casuistry?

The jury, a good deal bewildered, could only bring in verdict according to the evidence rendered, and so separate to allay the excitement brewing without. Who can tell all that takes place between Anna Burleson and Mr. Merkes after the funeral is over, and all the excitement attendant thereon subsided? The wedding is postponed for many weeks, during which the feelings of Hoppleton in reference to Anna Burleson are largely perplexed; on the whole, a kind of wondering admiration for her too.

"Oh, Pa, are you not afraid religion will receive a terrible shock here?" Laura had asked of her father on their way home, almost the moment they were out of the door. Her father even smiles, in his healthy and hearty piety, at her frightened manner. "Shock, Laura?" he says; "the very shock of the wicked suspicion itself proves how very rarely a Christian minister gives occasion to any thing of the kind! God's laws of health in Mr. Merkes are as sacred and inflexible as any other of his laws in the Solar System or the Ten Commandments. Innocent of this absurd charge,

he suffers from it, as part of his punishment for breaking God's law in reference to health and human nature. Possible of *him*, you know !”

“Yes, and impossible of *you* !” adds Laura.

But the day comes at last. Hoppleton looks forward to it. Hoppleton holds its breath, on the arrival of the day, until the ceremony is over, and then lets its breath loose again with a “Well !”

The ceremony takes, place, of course, in Mr. Burleson's parlor. Mr. Wall performs it. Laura is there. At Anna's nervously reiterated request she spent the previous night with her and began “fixing her up” about daybreak. Hoppleton has to this day serious doubts as to whether or not Edward Burleson was present.

“But, Pa, are you not afraid they'll be dreadful unhappy? Their dispositions—all of those children?” asks Laura of her father, the day after the ceremony, in the privacy of his study.

“My dear Laura,” says her father, “I have long since given up even attempting to understand human nature. When you most certainly expect it to be happy it is not happy. When you are perfectly certain it must be miserable, it is the exact reverse. I can't say I would like to have seen *you* marry Mr. Merkes. But,” he continues, with a smile, “if you had set your heart upon it, I would have said, Very well.”

“You dearest father!” she says, putting her arms around his neck. “I am often tempted to fear you think I am a burden. But nobody has come along whom I *could* marry, so far. Don't blame me, Pa. I've dressed the best, looked the best I could, been just as agreeable to every body as I knew how. You know I can't help myself.”

There is a smile on her lips, but a suspicion of tears, too, in her eyes.

“Be sensible, Laura,” says her father, gravely. “You know we would regard your getting married, except so far as your own happiness is concerned, as the greatest loss that could fall upon us, especially since that willful, determined John has gone.” He draws his daughter nearer to him and kisses her, the most affectionate father in the world; but, say what you will, it is not to her the arm or the kiss of a husband. Her hands linger continually about her mother’s and her father’s neck, the tendrils of an ivy which has no oak of its own around which to wind. But she does not, can not receive from these the affection she yearns for. They have for her the perfect love of a mother, a father for an only daughter. Vaguely, hungrily she obeys the promptings of nature and seeks of them more than this; seeks, to be vaguely, continually disappointed.

But, just here, she and Anna Burleson had parted company—Anna falling back upon herself into a wretchedness which takes even Mr. Merkes as a lesser evil. Very different Laura Wall, true type of a class of women often the loveliest: certainly, of all beings alive, the most purely unselfish and abundant in good works.

CHAPTER XXV.

In which Mrs. General Likens enacts the savage Medea to her Offspring.

SOME three months have passed since General Likens's death. Spring has robed all the woods in green, stooping to touch the General's grave, too, with verdure as it passed by. But it is not memories of the General which bows the head of the young minister so, as he rides slowly past the grave this afternoon. The bridle hangs loosely in his hand, and Mike adopts his own gait, pretty much his own road. He is thinking.

He looks up as he passes a turn in the road, and sees John walking along home from school before him. She by no means brightens, only darkens instead, his train of thought: darkens it as a star does the cloud through which it breaks.

"And here *you* are, too," he says to himself, just above his breath, "young and slight; no father, mother, brother, sister—any other relation I have ever heard of in the world; no land, no house, very little money of your own; more like a bird of the forest than any thing else I know; plumage, food for the day, a nest for the night, all you have or care to have. And yet as self-reliant, as self-possessed, as composed, as perfectly confident and happy, too, dear me, as— Like nothing else in all the world! Oh, you darling!"

"And, oh, you fool!" exclaims something else within him—common-sense, conscience, something or other. "You ought to have thought of all this before. What is the use of indulging in such notions *now*? Besides, it is sinful."

By this time John, in advance, has heard hoofs behind. Seeing who it is, she throws her sun-bonnet off her brow upon her shoulders, and stands, all glowing, looking back and waiting for him. It is, to him, like leaping into an abyss; but there is no disposition to do any thing else. So he dismounts, leads his horse by the bridle to where she stands, gives Mike a cut with his whip which sends him flying homeward, neighing to himself as he goes, "Better that than the buggy," and thus Mr. Wall accompanies the young schoolmistress with slow, grave step.

"Yes, delightful evening!" he says aloud. And, "Oh, how charming you are!" he says too, but not aloud, and with a keen sense, in the same instant, of pleasure and of pain. "Take care! take care!" cries the other voice within him.

She *is* charming, she *is* lovely. That calm, happy light of intelligence and feeling which shines from within! That transparent frankness and sincerity! "If I was standing beside Burleson on the edge of a precipice," he says to himself, "I would get away as fast as I could, lest I should be tempted to push him over. Out of all the universe she is exactly the woman for me, in every respect and exactly. And *he* must interfere. There's that *other*, why can he not love *her*!"

"I am glad to see you," begins John, in an earnest way.

"I am happy to hear it!" he says on the spot.

He knows his full error in the very moment he commits it, but eyes, tones, and all go recklessly into his expression. She looks inquiringly up at his face for a moment, and then the color suffuses cheek, temple, neck. But she rallies again after a while.

"I am glad to see you, because I wished to speak with you about Mrs. General Likens," says John.

"You do not think her really ill?" asks her companion,

a little alarmed at the path he had been upon the verge of entering. "Engaged to Louisiana! Engaged to Louisiana!" has been ringing in his ears.

"I am puzzled to know what is the matter with her," says John.

"I know that she is changed since the General's death," says her companion. "Grown suddenly old—growing older every day rapidly. It has surprised me. Something of the kind is natural—her loss, you know. But she has such a strong character, I supposed she would bear his death with more fortitude."

"That was my hope," adds John. "She had so much the stronger, at least the more active mind of the two. I can understand how the General would have missed her exceedingly every hour of the day, if she had been taken away first. But her affliction at his death is so different from what I had supposed it would be."

"I notice every day she seems to take less and less interest in the house and the farm," remarks the young minister. "The house, too, seems to be in more confusion—you have to be so much at that school, you know."

There is the faintest tone of dislike to the school in his words, and she takes it up on the spot.

"Teaching is my regular business in life, Mr. Wall," she says. "I am sure all my income is from it. I am very glad indeed it is such a pleasant school."

"I beg your pardon," he says, disliking the school a great deal more than ever. "If you were not so—so happily constituted as you are your school would have worn you out long ago. Teach? I would rather dig ditches than that."

"But we are talking about Mrs. General Likens," says John, pleasantly.

"Yes, I rarely hear her scolding the servants now. She

used to be always going round and round the house and yard, like a great bee."

"But she does so still," adds John.

"More than ever, if possible," continues the young minister; "but it is as if only from the force of habit. She never is still a moment; but she does not seem to be interested in any thing."

"You can not tell how it pains me," adds John. "She will spin almost violently for a while. Then go to work at the loom on some special web or other. Then give it all up for her reel or her knitting. And preserving, too; last year, before this time, she had put away a large quantity of early fruit. In fact, it was a positive anxiety with her to have all her old supply eaten up out of the way, so that she might make more. A few weeks ago she had all the fruit gathered, all the sugar got out, all the brass kettles scoured and ready. But it was only from the impulse of habit. I do not believe she actually did any thing at last."

"Do you ever try to console her for her loss?"

"No, not of late. She always said, 'Never mind me, child. Don't fear for me. I'll bear up under it. I was expectin' it.' And that is what she always says whenever any of the neighbors attempt consolation."

"It is a little singular," says the young minister, "her not wishing me to read the Bible at family worship. 'Pray with us, Mr. Wall;' you remember she said; 'but don't read—at least, not just yet.' You recollect, whoever led in prayer at family worship, the General always read himself. He seemed to regard it as a part of his peculiar duty as head of the family."

"And her attempting to lead in the Sunday afternoon instruction of the negroes," adds John. "When she found, after two or three Sundays, that she could not do it, her

having you preach to them in the old barn every Sunday night instead."

"His old arm-chair, too," said her companion, with a smile. "You haven't forgot. In a forgetful moment I sat down in it once—only once, you remember!"

"You could make every allowance for her," says John, smiling through her tears. "The family Bible, too—she wrapped it up in one of his large red silk handkerchiefs. It is stowed away under her pillow, I believe."

"And she has become so silent, comparatively," continues Mr. Wall. "She talks on sometimes as if from force of habit—talks just to *be* talking, as she used to. It sounds painfully hollow and heartless to me. Does she ever write any poetry now?"

"You know it has been her ruling passion," says John, throwing her deep bonnet more off her fair face and looking at her companion, balanced between a smile and tears. "She has a whole trunkful in a closet under the stairs. I do believe she has read nearly the whole of it to me—some of it over and over again. And I tell you there is real poetry among it, too; a little too rough, too straightforward; but some really vigorous lines. If she only had been thoroughly educated! And she used to write almost every night at the little desk in the corner by the bed. Her having me to read it to seemed to be a fresh stimulus to her after I came. And this is what I wished to speak to you about. In the last few weeks she has attempted often to write. I notice her after I go to bed. I never saw a line of it, but I know what it is. She was attempting to write some lines upon the General, or upon his death. But she always gives it up—leans her head on the desk and weeps instead. She thinks I am asleep. I do believe she has abandoned the effort now altogether. I was very unfortunate a few days ago. I said to her, 'Sup-

pose you let me copy out some of your best pieces in a blank book?' I thought it might amuse her. But she refused. 'Pshaw! nonsense, child!' she said, as if perfectly indifferent. Last night, after I was asleep, I was wakened by a sudden blaze of light in the room. There was Mrs. General Likens seated on the floor by the hearth. She had dragged out the trunk from the closet, and was slowly burning up every thing in it, one sheet at a time, in the fireplace. I was on the point of trying to persuade her not, yet thought it better to leave her uninterrupted. But to see her there at midnight, at such a work, her pale old face lighted up by the glare! I am afraid my offer before only reminded her to do it."

"And there was nothing in the world she seemed to prize more than her poetry," said Mr. Wall.

"Nothing," exclaimed John; "and that made it seem worse. It may be foolish in me, but it looked as if she were burning asunder the last tie that held her to earth."

"In other words," said the young minister, after a while, "she really and sincerely loved her husband—*loved* him!"

It was singular with what pleasure Mr. Wall dwelt upon that word "loved."

"And they had lived together so long," said John, softly, and coloring in echo to her companion's tones. "More than thirty years. So used to each other."

It was dangerous. Such a soft evening; so quiet and balmy the air; so still and silent the woods through which wound their path. Only the weight of a leaf to break the balance of his purpose is needed. The young minister is alarmed for himself. "Engaged! engaged!" cries the ghost in the cellar; so loud, too, he is almost afraid his fair companion will hear it also.

Perhaps she has, for she has quickened her gait decidedly.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Bob Long finds Something tougher than Greek or Hebrew.

“**B**E strictly honorable, Wall, my fine fellow !” Burleson had once said. It was the last time that young lawyer’s pressing “business” had called him, incidentally, into the Likens neighborhood. He said it as he parted from Mr. Wall at the General’s front gate, after a somewhat protracted visit.

“I live in Hoppleton,” he had argued with his old college friend, “and you live here. Unfortunately for me, Miss John too lives here. Unfortunately—I hope you regard it so—for you, Miss Mills lives in Hoppleton. Now don’t get things mixed up, Wall. Before you got to be so bearded and stout and ruddy you used to be absent-minded—in the Seminary, you remember. Don’t be that in this matter. Don’t mistake one of these young ladies for the other, whatever you do. They are not in the least alike, and you know it.”

“I don’t understand you—” Mr. Wall had begun to say. But that was false; he did, perfectly; so he said nothing at all, was only very dignified—quite like Mr. Merkes.

“Of course you don’t understand me,” said the other gentleman, on his seat in his buggy and gathering up the reins. “Not at all. Only remember a friend of yours admires and loves, above all things in the world, a certain lady of your acquaintance, unfortunately. And you are actually—ahem!—engaged to somebody in Hoppleton. An admirable match, my dear fellow! Blooming Miss

Loo ! Admirable ! You couldn't do better ! Now don't you interrupt my little plans, and I won't interrupt yours. And I will add this, Wall," he continues, taking his whip in his left hand with the reins, to lay the right hand gravely on his friend's shoulder : " you know I don't profess to have any purpose in life—perfectly devil-may-care ; and I don't have any except—John Easton. Headlong I go to the—Adversary you preach about—if I fail to win her. My soul's at stake—look out ! You know all. Honor and fair play, *Carolus meus !* "

And with a nod of his handsome head and a shake of the reins on black Bob, he is gone. Gone, leaving his friend very indignant, if only there were not a vague, creeping sense of almost guilt which rises up against it. " And yet what have I done, or said ? " he asks himself.

It all comes back to mind as he walks beside the fair temptress this lovely evening. " And perhaps they actually are engaged," he thinks to himself. " But even supposing they are *not* engaged, what good will that do me ? *I am engaged.* " And off he goes in unpleasant meditations. He is enumerating to himself, by way of offset against John, all Miss Louisiana Mills's excellences. She is so beautiful, and—and— Try it again. She has such beautiful teeth, and silken hair, and exquisite complexion, and—and— Stop ! She laughs so much, and with such a silvery peal, and— She wears such beautiful dresses, and— Yes, her fingers on the keys of the piano are so very white ! For his life he can not recall, or even plausibly invent, another excellence, trait even, for Miss Loo. " And I am actually engaged—"

" Do you really think they *are* actually engaged ? " says his companion, looking into his face with a smile.

" What ? I beg your pardon," he says, with quite a start.

"I am afraid you are getting as absent-minded as you used to be," says John, coloring violently at his tones and manner. "It was about Miss Araminta I was speaking. You did not hear me." By his exclamation she understood the whole of his reverie perfectly. She was heartily sorry—alarmed—she had asked the question. He seizes upon it gladly, however.

"Ah! oh, yes!" he says. "Miss Allen and Mr. Long! I don't wonder you are curious. It is no secret. Astonishing, is it not?"

He is delighted with the new topic, and proceeds to tell her all about it. He had learned it on the last of his many visits to Mr. Long's cabin in the woods. Generally he had found that gentleman busily engaged washing out his rifle, mending his shot-pouches, casting bullets, cutting wood for his fire, doing something or other to the skin of some animal recently slain, and like employments. Now he found him sitting idly on the sill of his cabin door, not even his knife in his hand, only biting at the ends of his disordered beard, and looking into the forest glowing with the lights and shades of the setting sun. He received his visitor cordially, but, that visitor could not help noticing, in an abstracted manner. Mr. Long's mind was occupied—was perplexed. Whatever the subject before him, Greek or Hebrew or Doc. Meggar, he had evidently been studying it over for hours, and had not finished that process either by a good deal. There was painful uncertainty in Mr. Long's eye, in Mr. Long's manner. His welcome to his visitor was almost mechanical. The manner in which he sliced the venison, too, from the haunch suspended in the chimney corner, and proceeded to broil it, indicated a preoccupied and troubled mind. His heart was evidently not in the dough, even while he made it up and proceeded to bake it in the old one-legged skillet. Any

one could see by the way he ground the coffee in the mill nailed to the wall that he was reckless of the results of his grinding. But when he asked blessing himself over the meal, instead of inviting his pastor to do so, as usual on such a visit, that pastor became uneasy. "Can I have offended him in any way?" he asked himself once or twice. He knew he had not. It was an idea that savored of Mr. Merkes, and he cast it out. But when, after supper, Mr. Long laid the usual books on the table, and his heart evidently not at all in doing so, then his visitor became really alarmed.

"My dear Mr. Long," he said, frankly, "what is the matter with you?"

"I kind o' thought all along it was to be *you*," answered that gentleman from the other side of the rough table, his right arm rested upon the Hebrew Bible open before him, his left hand busy curling the corner of his beard into little strands, and inserting the ends thereof into his mouth. "Somebody told me, I'm sure; I disremember who. It was *somebody*, I know." There was the accent of complaint in Mr. Long's remark.

"Told you what?" inquired his visitor.

"It may hev been the General before he died, or it may hev been his wife. Doc. Meggar? No, it couldn't hev been Doc.; he couldn't a' knowed. It was *somebody*, I know!" Mr. Long would seem to be indignant, if it were not that he is so evidently troubled in mind.

"But told you *what*?" demanded his visitor, coloring. Is it possible, he thinks, that any reports injurious to my character can be in circulation?

"Told me *you* was to be the man! Told me she was goin' to marry *you*!" replied his host, looking at him anxiously.

"But whom are you speaking of?" demands the young

minister, and with an almost guilty feeling in regard to Miss Louisiana. It is surprising how his face burns!

"There's just this one thing I want to say to you, Mr. Wall," says Mr. Long, with more of the troubled expression than before; "that is, it ain't too late for you yet. We are by ourselves here in these woods. Nobody need never know nothin' about it. If you only say so, I'm willin'. Don't you think I'm *not* willin'; I *am* willin'! I hev lived so long here by myself in this old cabin I don't keer as much about such things as perhaps you do. I ain't ready like for a notion of that sort. It is so sudden too."

"I declare—" began the young minister.

"Don't you fear about hurtin' my feelin's," interrupted his friend, with alacrity. "You're more than welcome to count me out. Only you go ahead; *I* won't interrupt. An' don't think a minute you disappint me. You *don't* disappint me!" said Mr. Long, with amazing energy. "You don't disappint me! Not a bit. In fact, I'd take it as a partic'lar favor if you would just go ahead."

"Mr. Long," said his guest, amazedly, "I have not the faintest idea of what you are talking about."

"Didn't you ever expect—didn't you ever intend to marry her?" asked Mr. Long, boldly too.

"Marry whom?" asks his guest, with considerable emphasis on the last word.

"Why *her*, of course—Miss Araminta Allen;" eyes never fixed more eagerly upon deer or wild-cat than now upon those of his visitor.

"Never!" replied his guest, with unbounded energy. "What on earth put such an idea in your head?" Mr. Wall is a little indignant as well as amazed.

"You didn't?" said Mr. Long, after a gloomy pause. "Well, somebody told me so. Perhaps I dreamed it. A

drownin' man, you know—a straw.” There was deep disappointment in Mr. Long's tones, and he pulled more slowly at the ends of his beard, more thoughtful, more troubled than before.

“But why should that trouble you?” asks his visitor, innocently.

“Miss Allen is a nice lady. I never said she wasn't,” remarks the hunter, meditatively. “She's got powerful energy. She ain't exactly pretty—not at all like that Miss John, for instance—but then she ain't what a man would call ugly. No. I reckon not. But it isn't that. You see I ain't used to bein' married. Besides, I ain't prepared for it. Likewise I ain't ready a bit. Hev *I* got any fixins for it? I want to know! Besides, farming? What do *I* know about farming? Now if it was hunting! An' them niggers of hers. ‘They need lambasting, every one of them,’ she says to me; ‘they're dyin' for it, Mr. Long,’ says she. ‘I can't do nothin' with them, now General Likens is dead; they run over me,’ says she. Well, *I* ain't the hand to look after black ones. It's a thing I ha'n't no experience in. What would you do about it, Mr. Wall?” And Mr. Long regards his pastor anxiously.

“It would seem as if you are actually engaged to the lady. Why did you not think of all that before?” asks Mr. Wall, his disposition to merriment over the rueful reasoning of his friend considerably checked by his own use of the word “engaged.” It is, of all the dictionary, the unpleasantest word to him.

“But, you see, I didn't know I was goin' to be engaged till I act'ly *was* engaged,” says Mr. Long, very promptly in vindication.

“But, then, how did you become engaged?” asks the other. “I confess I don't exactly understand.”

“You understand it just as much as I do,” retorted Mr.

Long. "Two minutes before it happened I tell you I'd no more a notion such a thing was goin' to happen—" Mr. Long speaks with the most earnest truthfulness.

"Yes, but—" begins Mr. Wall. Very faintly, however; he has had his own experiences.

"You see," continued the hunter, with energy, "she asked me if I couldn't bring her some venison some time. I remember, it was that day we buried General Likens she first asked me. But I didn't. I was shy like. 'You haven't brought me that venison, Mr. Long,' she says to me next time she sees me at church, smilin' too. 'Haven't been able to shoot any, perhaps,' she says. I couldn't say yes to that. I had killed plenty after seein' her. 'If you *should* manage to kill any deer-meat,' she says to me, smilin', 'I'll be glad to buy it. You needn't be afraid I won't pay you,' says she. An' so it went on. Yes, I took her some. Oh yes, I took her some," continued Mr. Long, biting reflectively at his beard. "And then I had to take her some again. Then she had set her heart on a pet bear cub, an' I had *that* to get. Then she couldn't live another day without a little wild honey—did I know of any bee-tree? Yes, I did know of a bee-tree—fifty. What's the use?" says Mr. Long, summing up abruptly and rising from the table. "However it's come about, one thing's certain: we two are engaged to get married, an' mighty soon at that!" And the hunter took up his rifle instinctively from the corner of the room, weighed it in both hands held palm upward, glancing his eyes lingeringly along it, put it down again discontentedly. "An' about this here Hebrew," he continued, pausing by the table as he walked restlessly to and fro, turning over the exceedingly soiled leaves of the open book with loving finger—"what about *it*, I'd like to know? Occupy my mind an' my time! Somethin' to keep me hard at it away from all

sorts of devilment? Hah, yes! I'll have *that* enough now, let alone Greek an' Hebrew!" and he continued his restless walk about the cabin. "You won't mention it, of course," he said at last, pausing a moment to make the solemn announcement, "but I've weighed the two, the one against the other, an' of the two I prefer the Hebrew. Yes," added Mr. Long, after standing a moment in further reflection, "it's the Hebrew here I prefer! Tough? Yes; who said it was not tough? But it's the easiest handled. Ah, yes, never mind!" adds Mr. Long, pursuing his walk and his meditations. "But what's the use? It's all settled. *She* settled it! Never was so astonished in all my life as I was there that day!" he adds to himself rather than to his guest, as he walks up and down.

"I am to perform the ceremony, I suppose," said his friend at length, to manifest his sympathy in some way.

"Strange, she wouldn't hear to it at first," said Mr. Long, pausing a moment. "'Any body rather than *him*!' she says, mad like. Hah!" exclaimed Mr. Long, as the idea struck him, "that must 'a been the way I come to think there'd been somethin' between her an' you, Mr. Wall, onst. 'Any body rather than *him*!' she says, says she. Hah, yes! She was so set like, the notion flashed on me sudden, Here's your way to get out of it, Bob! So I said, slow an' solemn, 'Very well, Miss Allen; it's him or nobody!' You see, I was frightened at the idea of gettin' married to any body—a'n't over it yet. I expected she would blaze out—have her own way; mules, you know, an' women will. But no. She looked up at me, surprised like, an' said, as gentle! 'Very well, Mr. Long, if you think best.' 'An' Doc. Meggar is to wait on me,' I said. Doc. Meggar! Knowin', too, how onst she'd as lief a rattlesnake 'd come into her house. It looks bad in me, Mr. Wall, I know," continued Mr. Long, apologetically, "but I was real skear-

ed at the idea of gettin' married—not over it yet. ‘As you please, Robert,’ says she, right off. It was mean in me, real mean,” continued Mr. Long, walking the floor of the cabin slowly and thoughtfully. “Ah, well”—he stopped to say it—“if I *hev* got to be married, I’d just as lief it was to her as to any body else.”

“It’s *my* opinion you should feel highly flattered by her preference,” said his companion, gravely.

“That’s just one thing more I’d like to know the best in the world,” said Mr. Long, facing full around on his guest. “What in the world did she see in *me* to take a fancy to me, I want to know? It’s that puzzles me worst of all.” And he stroked his beard and waited with honest, handsome face a solution of his difficulty.

Perhaps Miss Anna Burleson could have told him. And it was with a laughing sketch of this visit to Mr. Long’s cabin that the young minister entertained his companion. At least, he gave her the substance of it. No sooner do they come in distant sight of Mrs. General Likens’s, however, than they are interrupted. It is Moll, the house-girl, who has been waiting to catch Miss John on the way home, in a corner of the fence where the lane begins.

“Oh, Miss John!” she begins, “I wish you wouldn’t leave ole missis. She won’t say so, but she’s sick, heart-sick. Wus to-day than ever. Please hurry home. Oh, Mass Wall! pray de Lord for ole missis. She need it.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. Charles Wall makes his terrible and hairbreadth Escape.

IF the writer of these pages had at this moment the whole race before him, every ear and eye attent, he would dare say to said assembly: If there be a man or woman among you without some thorn, great or little, in flesh or spirit, you will please step forward and accept from me a million of dollars in gold! Yes, would dare say it, nor risk a cent thereby, provided no man or woman lied in the matter! You who read these lines know perfectly well that *you* could not claim the million.

The one of young Mr. Wall's troubles over which he most worries these days, which keeps him awake o' nights, too, is the perpetual demand he makes upon himself, "How can I honorably break with Miss Loo?"

It was the unhappiness of the young minister, when, some two weeks after the events recorded in the last chapter, he stood before the door of Colonel Mills in Hoppleton, that he was there, after months of reflection, to correct a mistake. It is *his* mistake he has to correct—a terrible mistake and he must correct it. But how to do it. Upon that question he had spent intense thought.

He had thought of accomplishing his object by a letter to the lady; but there was something mean in that—something cowardly, like shooting at a distance and from behind a cover. In his desperation he had even thought of devolving the duty of correcting his mistake in some delicate way upon his cousin Laura Wall. But that was even more

cowardly. Besides, he dreaded lest the task would be indignantly declined; or, if undertaken, would, in some vague way, wreck and ruin the kind undertaker. And now, at last, he has done what he ought simply to have done—and he knew it at the time—at first. He is come in person, in a frank and manly way, to correct his mistake.

He knocks, and is shown into the parlor. There it is, that sofa! Not for worlds would he sit on it again. He takes a chair instead—a hard-backed, uncompromising parlor chair. Miss Louisiana keeps him waiting some time, and he begins again, as he sits, the old hopeless task of arranging what to say and how to say it. It is useless. He gives it up in despair. In the midst of it there is the sound of feet upon the floor. The door opens, and in comes Miss Louisiana, but accompanied by her mother. The visitor feels immensely relieved. How not to greet her, as of old, with a kiss on entering had been the stumbling-block in the very threshold of the matter; and that question is settled! In a glance the visitor notices how very much stouter Miss Louisiana has grown since he saw her on his last visit, weeks ago. As she comes in side by side with her mother, he observes, too, how wonderfully like that mother she is growing to be, and the observation is by no means flattering to the young lady. As to the rest, Mrs. Mills and her daughter are the same in their manner as ever. With a ludicrous consciousness of a resemblance to Mr. Long, Mr. Wall begins about the health, and then the weather; checks himself as he comes to the crops. All very well so far, but the main matter is not settled—is not even approached as yet.

“And so you are not going to the city at last?” asks Mrs. Mills, after a tour of the parlor, pulling at the curtains, arranging the books on the centre-table, the ornaments on the mantel, as she goes.

“No, Madam,” says the visitor, with a blind sense of approaching relief.

“Actually going to live in that Likens neighborhood? Going to settle down there?” inquires Mrs. Mills again.

“Yes, Madam. At least, so far as I can now see,” replies the visitor, with still greater sense of relief.

“In that dull country place, Mr. Wall? Law me, I wonder how you can stand it!” says Louisiana, with a peal of laughter. “Only chickens and pigs and people!”

“Oh, it is not at all dull to one as busy there as I am,” replies Mr. Wall, more and more relieved in mind.

“I know *I* never could live in such a place. Lawsy! I would die in a week!” says Miss Loo, with unbounded mirth at the very idea.

Mr. Wall feels his cheeks glowing. He knows that the Hour has arrived, and that he is the Man. He begins:

“I am glad to have the opportunity of seeing you this afternoon, Mrs. Mills. I have feared—”

“Law me, Mr. Wall,” interposes good Mrs. Mills, “we all along—Colonel Mills and me—knew it would never suit. You see we know Loo, here, a great deal better than you. Law me, didn’t we raise her? *She* isn’t fitten to be a minister’s wife—law me, no!”

What a plain and easy settlement of matters. After so many, many weeks of embarrassing planning, contriving, bothering himself to death, too, on the part of the ex-lover. “Henceforth I will let things settle themselves,” thinks the young minister. But there is a faint sense of pain, too, why he can not tell, even in this moment of immense relief. Miss Loo is so very beautiful!

At this juncture Colonel Mills enters the room. The visitor wonders if he had not been sent for by the back way when he first entered the house. However, here the Colonel is, as large and round and red as ever. He is glad to

see Mr. Wall. Very glad ; but he plays with the heavy seals which hang at such a tangent from the lower edge of his white waistcoat, as if he was anxious too—had something to do—something momentous to say, at least.

“I was just telling Mr. Wall, my dear, that Loo and he would never do at all. You know *we* always knew *that*. Law me, Mr. Wall—a minister’s wife ! Loo, here, is no more fitten for it—” says Mrs. Mills.

“But what do you regard as a qualification for it, Mrs. Mills ?” asks her visitor, now entirely at his ease, save that dull pain. So is the Colonel ; at least he plays not so nervously with his dangling seals.

“A minister’s wife ! law me, Mr. Wall ! Why, Loo here is so *lazy* ! Much as I can do to get her up in time for breakfast. Besides, she is so fond of dress—you know you are, child. It’s a regular shame. Loo ? Law me !” continues her mother, with the energy of entire conviction. “She isn’t good for any thing on earth but to eat custards and things and be petted. Me and the Colonel here, we’ve spoiled her shameful.”

“No, Mr. Wall, it would never do,” says the husband, coming to the assistance of his wife. “We always knew it—Mrs. Mills and I. Never do ! And Loo is not religiously disposed. Not at all. It is to be regretted, but she isn’t. She couldn’t feel with you about converting souls, and such like.”

“Besides,” urges the mother ; “why, Mr. Wall, it would take a regular *rich* man to marry Loo. Ministers don’t make money any thing like other people. Law me, Loo ? Why, she’d break you—break you all to pieces in one year. Colonel and me ought to know ! Nothing to laugh at, child. You ought to be ashamed of the way you spend money. That very silk you got on now cost your Pa over fifty dollars. And them bracelets—Colonel, what *did* they cost ?”

But the young minister has been on his feet now for some time. He stands by the mantel entirely at home. Never so much so in that parlor before as he is now. There lingers that dull pain low down in his bosom somewhere. To give this lovely girl up, here and now and forever! But it doesn't matter! Except that, he feels comfortable, is almost amused at the sudden and natural solution of all his troubles.

Louisiana fills the sofa, serene and smiling as ever. There is a lingering anxiety still visible on the faces of the Colonel and his wife—a little sense of shame. They do not know how their visitor will bear the blow.

"It is due myself to say just one word," says the young minister with a quiet dignity felt by all there. "For a long time now I, too, have been satisfied that Miss Louisiana and myself are not suited to each other. I came to Hoppleton for this purpose, to see—to say—I am glad it is all pleasantly arranged. Yes, a minister's life *is* a hard one. In some respects at least. I don't think myself it would suit you, Miss Loo. It is best as it is. But I must bid you good-bye. Good-bye, Colonel. I will be glad to see you if you should visit our neighborhood. Mrs. Mills—but you never get away from Hoppleton, I believe;" and their visitor shook hands warmly with each. "Good-bye, Miss Loo;" and he took her white, soft hand in his.

Ah, that low, sullen pain. She is so *very* beautiful! "You must visit our neighborhood when fruit is ripe; come up with your father, we will be glad to see you;" and with a quiet bow and "Good-evening" to all, he is gone.

Yes, it would be a kind of heaven to marry beautiful Miss Loo and sit in that comfortable parlor by her side forever. "Eat and drink and—drift!" he says to himself as he walks away, the sullen pain a decided one. "Per-

haps all my notions of life are a fanaticism. Who knows but Mr. Merkes hoped and looked forward when he was young exactly as I now do? Mr. Merkes!" And Mr. Wall halts and says, "If I had it to do over again? I wonder, at last, if I am not a fool!"

The Colonel and his wife are a little astounded, even indignant, but infinitely relieved too. One thing they both feel—a sense of the highest respect for their visitor—a sense of superiority on his part they had not before imagined. As to Miss Loo, she is disappointed that he did not take a more affectionate farewell in parting. There is a singular flutter and sense of failing under her bodice, akin to a feeling very often felt, lower down, of hunger, sharply felt now. "Law me!" she says, with a laugh, when the front-door has closed; and then, "Oh lawsy, Ma, ain't you ashamed of yourself!" and a burst of tears.

"That young Wall is what I call a sensible fellow," remarks the Colonel to his wife that night as he winds up his watch in their chamber. His remark is the result of several hours' full reflection on the subject.

"You may say what you please, Colonel," replies his wife, as she ties the strings of her night-cap in the folds of her double chin, "but it had better be *him* at last than that young Burleson. He may have money. Yes, he's got money; but he'll help her spend it, I tell you! And he isn't settled down to business, and you know it. I hear say he drinks. I don't know. Gambles, maybe. I've been thinking it all over, Colonel; and I just tell you this: we'd better 'a trusted our Loo in the hands of the other. I'd feel safer, for one."

"But he came up to Hoppleton to break it off himself," said the Colonel, who looked more globular, but by no means so wealthy, now the broadcloth and watch-seals were off.

“That’s a fact—yes,” said the wife. There was a regret in her tones which was highly flattering to the departed lover. “Ah, well, I hope I may be mistaken about the other,” she added, in accents which young Burleson would by no means have been pleased to hear. “And I hate so to disappoint good Mr. Wall, his uncle. And Mrs. Wall. They don’t care for money themselves, not a bit. But, bless you, they’d both, Mr. Wall especially, set their hearts on his marrying Loo. I tell you, Colonel Mills,” Mrs. Mills continues, “property is—property! The most pious people in the world think a dreadful deal of it. No wonder! Suppose Loo had none! It’s—*every thing!*” Mrs. Mills adds, with emphasis unspeakable.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Facilis est Descensus— But why is the old Quotation so very hackneyed?

ONE other duty remains to the young minister. He is a vast deal stronger for it now that the other has been performed. He goes direct from Colonel Mills's to Edward Burleson's office. It is getting towards dusk, and the young lawyer is seated by his window, his chair tilted back, his feet on the table among the books, papers, and inkstands, a cigar in his mouth, a novel in his hand. The office is a perfect tangle of old boots, half-worn slippers, empty cigar-boxes, old newspapers, paper-covered novels, half a dozen empty porter-bottles, and any number of law-books, dusty enough, but showing no evidence of being much used. The floor is dirty and stained with tobacco juice beyond belief. There is an aspect of neglect, of reckless indifference in every thing, culminating in the owner himself. The young lawyer is by no means the same man he was on his arrival with Wall from college, more than a year ago now. He is changed, greatly changed. Perhaps if he was washed and shaved a little, and dressed with more care, he would look better. As it is, he seems to his visitor older by a great deal. Considerably stouter too, flushed and haggard—coarser in some way than his visitor could ever have supposed it possible of him.

“Glad to see you, Wall—glad to see you,” he says to his visitor. “Take a chair, if you can find one that isn't broken. When did you come down? How well and

hearty you look—so straight and strong! And such a beard—don't you know it is wicked? They would have turned you out of the Seminary for such a sin. Have a cigar? What's all the news?"

His visitor declines the cigar, and has no news—genial enough with his old associate, but separated from him as by some bottomless gulf now. What is it? he asks himself—what is it?

"News? No; nothing new with us," says Burleson, in reply to his questions. "Anna has married that sepulchral Mr. Merkes. Two or three weeks ago. They said he had struck his girl a blow too hard—killed it. I don't know, but wouldn't be the least surprised if he really did. You know, or, rather, you don't know the women. I think Anna would have given him up—an awful dose he was—but for that. It rallied her to him. Strange sex! Rather queer set, all of us! I suppose you heard of it. Nice couple!"

"And how do you like the law by this time?" asks his visitor with sincere interest, after further conversation.

"Oh, hang the law!" replies Burleson. "What a goose you are to ask such a question! Might as well ask any other swindler how he likes swindling by this time. And how is old General Likens? Ah, yes, dead; I had forgotten. Dull old chap. Sort of caryatides to support the household roof. Always in the same chair—always smoking; queer old genius!"

"But that Anderson case," persisted his visitor. "You can not tell what a name it has given you among the people as a lawyer. I was truly glad—"

"Look here, Wall," interrupted Burleson. "Listen a moment. There was once a worthless young fellow who persuaded a beautiful young girl to run away with him—for her money, mind. As soon as he gets that he begins a course

of brutal treatment—keeps it up for years—murders her at last outright with poison. That is Anderson! The people were for lynching him on the spot. He was rescued and put in the jail here. The thought struck me. I took his case. ‘*You* are too intelligent, too just, to permit *yourselves* to be carried away with the passion of the moment,’ I said to the twelve fools on the jury. It was after I had got the trial put off once or twice, the witnesses tangled up, and all that. I do not know what devil possessed me. I argued, plead, appealed to them as being this and being that—fathers, mothers, perhaps. Would you believe it? They actually acquitted that man! I only tried it to see just how much villainy the law—mind you, *the law*—is capable of committing. But it was too late when the man actually was acquitted—the dastardly, cold-blooded murderer of his miserable wife! She had poisoned herself—that was my theory, you see. As if he had not driven her to it, even if she had. And my own mother congratulated me on my eloquence! My father, delighted at my success, though he must know the man murdered his wife! That is the nature of my triumph. Glorious profession! You are a minister of God and the Gospel. Know what a lawyer is? A minister of the devil and of crime! Simple statistic, if ever there was one!” And the young lawyer resumes his cigar.

“But, really now, do you take *no* interest in your profession, all that apart?” asks his visitor, even anxiously, after a pause.

“Ask yourself,” is the reply. “Do you take any real interest in your profession? Sincerely, now, eh?”

“Of course I do!” exclaims the young minister, with energy. “You know I do!”

“Yes, I really believe you do,” says Burleson, after a pause. “But there’s a difference in our professions, you

see. Yours is God's work; mine is the devil's. It is impossible, my dear fellow, to become thoroughly interested in my profession except by becoming thoroughly a scoundrel. Do let us talk about something else. How is that gifted old female, Mrs. Likens? Always reminds me of—Arachne, wasn't it?—the mother of all the spiders, or the woman that was turned into a spider—something of the sort. How she could talk! It was that killed the General—not a doubt of it. Ought to be hung for it with a rope from her own yarn.”

“But why do you not enter some other business, Burleson, if you are so prejudiced against the law?”

“Become a merchant, eh? Why should I? I certainly have ample opportunities to lie and cheat as I am, without going behind a counter to do it.”

“But there is the political career—”

“And don't you know, my dear fellow, what it is to be a politician? Is it possible you can be so exceedingly ignorant? A lawyer is a man only going to the devil; a politician is a man actually gone to the devil! Hadn't you better suggest I should be an Editor, say? You a preacher, and making such infernal suggestions! I'm astonished at you. No wonder, however. All your life you have lived in the seminary or in the woods—it is little *you* know of this present evil world.”

“But what do you mean to do, Burleson, in life? You must excuse me—we are such old friends.”

“Oh, you are welcome!” said Burleson, lighting another cigar. “Do? I don't mean to do any thing. Do?” he continued, lying farther back in his chair, crossing his legs more comfortably over each other on the table. “There is just one thing I intend to do—know what that is?”

His old friend sat looking anxiously at him.

“Drift!” said Burleson, composedly, between two puffs.

“And—downward!” added his friend, slowly, and as if speaking to himself.

“And—downward,” repeated Burleson after him. “Yes, precisely. Especially as—never mind.”

The young minister rose and walked across the room to the other window, and stood for minutes looking out. A close observer might have detected a scarcely perceptible motion of his lips, perhaps in prayer, while he stood with his back to the young lawyer, who continued to smoke with a kind of indifferent enjoyment.

“Burleson, my dear old chum,” said his visitor, coming back after a while and resuming his seat, “can I say nothing to you—”

“Wall, my old friend,” interrupted the other, “you may sit here and talk to me steadily the night through, if you say so. There’s a whole box of candles under my bed in the other room. You see this box of cigars is just opened. And I will listen to every word you have to say with all my might. But I tell you from the start it’s no use. None in the world! You have often tried it before—faithfully. I’m fifty times worse now. It is too late. I’ll give you a text for your next sermon. I don’t know in what part of the Bible it is; it’s a book I never open these days. But it is this: ‘My Spirit shall not always strive.’ Use my case as an illustration, and you can make a powerful discourse of it. I do believe,” continued the young lawyer, smoking reflectively, “if I could bend myself to the work, I could write as splendid a sermon on that text as was ever written on any text by mortal man. How I could preach it too! And, by-the-by, Wall, I am glad to hear *you* are turning out to be such a good preacher. A slim chance I thought you were when you preached your first sermon at the church here. Pshaw! who was it? Some fellow from Hoppleton—a lawyer collecting debts up in your

neighborhood—heard you up there once or twice. He told me all about it when he came back. I do believe you have converted him—if only a lawyer *could* be converted! I wish you would come down and give *us* a sermon occasionally.”

“How is your father’s family?” asked the one addressed, after a long silence.

“As usual. More quiet, now Anna is married. Did you ever hear of such a match? Bug has the measles, or something of the sort, now and then. And you are boarding at old General Likens’s still? There’s one thing about that old pair, not generally known either: they are rich—rich as cream. My father is their banker, you know. I do wonder who in the mischief they will leave it to.”

It was said with the same careless manner as all the rest. If the young preacher had not been so occupied with thinking of something else he might have noticed a look of keen inquiry in the eyes of his friend as he spoke.

“Mr. Ramsey is coming up to take tea and spend the evening at my uncle’s to-night, and I have to leave for home early in the morning,” said Mr. Wall, rising to leave. “And there is one thing it is but fair and honorable for me to tell you, Burleson. You once told me I was engaged to be married to Miss Louisiana Mills. Well, if I ever was, now I am not. If there ever was any thing of the kind it is all over now.”

The same low, dull pain again—fainter now. It was singular.

“Blooming Miss Loo! Discarded you, eh? Couldn’t afford to marry a preacher. Exactly. Just what I expected. One thing, however; *she* had no more to do with it than our Bug. Don’t be angry, Wall; but I declare that girl always reminds me of one of those fair Circassian slaves one reads about, for sale in the market at Constanti-

noble. Her Pa and Ma are not one's idea of a Circassian chief and his wife exactly, and they don't actually offer Miss Loo for sale. But I tell you what it is—the man that brings the most money gets her! What a rascally world it is! I forgot to say it," said Burleson, after smoking a while. "I am sorry for it. Accept my unfeigned condolences."

"And there is another thing I wished to say—"

"By Jove, look here, Wall!" interrupted Burleson, with unwonted energy. "If you really want to marry Miss Loo just say so. It will be the easiest thing in the world to run off with her. A splendid idea! I'll get the buggy and the license and a justice of the peace ready. Tell you what I'll do—I'll pay the fine for you myself, if she's under age. It's only five hundred dollars or so. You needn't go to the house. I'll get my mother to invite her to our house to tea any evening you say so. She'll do any thing I ask her. I know Miss Loo well; you can persuade her into it. If you have got a particle of spirit it's a splendid idea."

The young lawyer had thrown away his cigar and was on his feet. He looked handsome as Apollo, in his enthusiasm.

"Thank you—thank you, Burleson," said Mr. Wall, resuming his seat and smiling at his companion's ardor. "But I would rather not."

"But what can be your objection? Ministers often do such things. People only shake their heads at first, and think that much the more of them afterwards."

"I have two objections," said the young minister, composedly. "In the first place, I would not steal Colonel Mill's dog, and I certainly would not steal his daughter; wouldn't *steal* any of his possessions, much less the one dearest to him of all. Hold on a moment, and hear me

out ! I wouldn't steal Miss Loo even if I loved her. But, in the second place, I *don't* love her. I may have done so in a fashion once, but I do not love her now at all."

The same low, sullen pain far down among the roots of the heart.

"Don't tell me !" broke in Burleson, impatiently. "You are smarting now under your treatment from her father and mother—sordid old couple ! Your love will all come back—"

"No, it will not," said the other, rising quietly from his chair, hat in hand.

"And why not ?"

"Simply because I love another lady. And love her infinitely more than I ever loved Miss Mills."

"You don't mean—" An oath, the first the young minister had ever heard from his friend, filled out the sentence. Something suddenly coarse in his whole bearing.

"This is my special object in calling here this afternoon," said Mr. Wall, after a painful pause. "It is due to our old friendship. Honor requires I should give you fair warning. I do love Miss John, but I have never breathed such a thing to her. I tell you frankly I intend to do it. But I will be fair with you. I will give you one full week to visit and win her if you can. If she loves you, very well, she will accept you. If she does not love you, she will tell you so plainly and finally. A week ? You may have, for what I know, years of opportunity. We are both poor, very poor, perfectly poor. No telling when we can get married, even if she is willing to risk it ever. And you are rich. One thing I know—whatever she does will be right. However you or I may like it, it will be right. And you know it as well as I."

It was dark already. The shades of night grew darker

and darker; but the young lawyer kept his seat for hours, lighting no candle, forgetting exactly how he had parted from his visitor. All the future lay before him in the darkness more vividly than if he actually beheld it, as from an eminence, under the clear shining of the sun. Two paths reached away before him in life. The one narrow, rugged, ascending steeply, climbing noble heights. And with this path is associated sudden and utter change from what he now is. But he had never dreamed of ascending thus save as another Dante guided of Beatrice, and only in the last year has that Beatrice crossed his path.

“And Heaven has carefully arranged it,” he reasons to himself, sitting in the darkness hours after, and with bitterness, “that this friend of mine is to rob me, it is very plain, of this last chance of—Paradise! *She* would have made a man of me. That is, perhaps so—at least if any body could. Very good! At least mine is the easiest road; and God decides it so. What is the use, anyhow? It is all fanaticism, I dare say—any thing else. This forty or sixty years or so of eating and drinking and sleeping is all one *knows* of one’s existence. If there is any life after this, let it explain itself, arrange itself, when it arrives. Drift! Yes, drift until it comes, if ever it does come!”

But who can explain why it is that, as the one love sinks, like the sun, under the horizon, Miss Louisiana Mills should rise, like the full moon, above the same? Rebound? Reaction?

“How exactly she will suit me!” this Turkish sultan reasons after a while. “Blooming Miss Loo! Her father is rich, mine is rich—the very ordinance of Heaven itself! Nothing in the world to do but to marry Miss Loo and—drift!” Only there is no dull and sullen pain in this case—pain as of knife with sharp and poisoned edge rather.

“It is all one in the end—who cares?” the young law-

yer sums up in the end. "The Greeks had two distinct Cupids, gods of love, Eros, whatever they called it; very different and distinct sorts of love indeed. If I am not to have the higher I can take the lower. It's all a farce, anyway. If I only had the energy I'd found a new philosophy,—religion. This: All the world's a stage—why, that is what Shakspeare says—and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances. And life is one perpetual farce or tragedy, being continually acted on the boards of the world for the amusement of the gods.

‘For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl’d
Far below them in the valleys.’

Anna and Mr. Merkes, for instance! Dare say Loo and I will get along as well as that remarkable pair."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The supremest of Woman's Rights.

MR. MERKES and Anna Burleson !

For weeks after their marriage the eyes of Hoppleton are upon the little house in the suburbs with the green blinds, in which dwell Mr. and Mrs. Merkes and the children. The ears of Hoppleton are intensely strained in that direction. Hoppleton awaits an explosion.

“When a man’s wife, now, has money, a man can stand it,” says, at last, poor Issells to his wretched spouse ; “but when she hasn’t a cent, and is sickly besides, the best thing he can do is to cut his throat !” And he snaps his shears savagely together and blasphemes.

The first Sunday after the wedding all Hoppleton attends the church of Mr. Wall senior to see the couple. Quite a sensation as Mr. Merkes precedes his bride down the aisle—tall, thin, dry—perfectly aware of the wrong done him by the eyes of all there ; somewhat grim for a bridegroom, differing only by reason of a new suit of clothes. Any body can see, however, that it is his wife who has brushed his hair. And Mrs. Merkes is very much the same—only with a coming and going of little blushes over her face, a dignity as of defiance, and little bits of nervousness over her manner, really charming to see ; younger, too, a good deal, she seems to be. She has only one thought—a *husband*—*my* husband ! And the thought clothes him to her eyes, as she sits beside him, as with all excellence.

“But how about the children?” asks Hoppleton.

“Long-legged boys to make pants for. Oh, won’t she be sick of her bargain!” says Issells. “Spank the younger ones like thunder as soon as she dare—see if she don’t!”

At school during the week, at Sunday-school, going along the streets—for they visit the stores to buy this little thing and that now for themselves—the children are closely inspected. They are evidently brightened up in some way.

The fact is, to have a house of her own to attend to is delightful to Mrs. Merkes. All her father’s energy, long suppressed and souring upon itself for lack of object, now develops itself wonderfully. The boys would be really manly fellows if they were dressed up a little, encouraged to hold up their heads. At least I’ll see, says Mrs. Merkes to herself; and she goes to work on them with ardor. Her success astonishes herself.

“The poor little thing!” says Mrs. Merkes to herself of Mary; I wonder how she *would* look if she was fitted up nicely. And she gradually begins to make a sack or so, then a full suit for Mary, then a new-fashioned fancy apron she sees a picture of in the last Magazine. There is an undeveloped milliner in the late Miss Anna Burleson. She takes a pleasure in planning and cutting out and fitting for all the children she never dreamed of before. It is not the *kind* of work she has now to do, though; it is simply that it *is* a work devolved on her to be done. She has a position now to fill, a something to do; all her slumbering energies engage with real delight in what lies before them.

And so she grows to love the children. And the children—very shy at first, poor little partridges!—grow to love her. She gradually becomes aware of the fact that these are the only children that will claim her care—becomes contented with them as such, people compliment her so upon them—even proud of them. No wonder; they

all bloom under her hand like flowers closed hitherto to the sun. She is radiant with the success of her efforts. And by-and-by she sinks naturally and comfortably into the place and feeling of the energetic mother of a large family. Is it because her unnatural state of mind has passed away that the seed received into her heart in girlhood—the seed of piety—now puts forth? In becoming a wife to Mr. Merkes, and then, slowly, a mother to his children, she becomes a Christian too. With the sallowness from the face flies the bitterness from the heart. Nature has resumed its sweet sway in her. Mrs. Merkes is a thousand times lovelier and happier than Anna Burleson. Every body acknowledges that.

And it is this reconciles her father and mother to the matter, slowly but surely. Mr. Merkes, continuing his school, never bothers them—he is too proud for that. They grow to esteem, even like him, though never as much as Anna would have them, of course.

It is all very well; but at last it doesn't agree with Mr. Merkes. It would be delightful to write him down as henceforth enjoying himself a little. It would seem more natural too; but then it would not be the truth. For many, many years he has been kept going as by stress of circumstances. Now that the stress is suddenly off of him, he relaxes somehow. He is as a ship which drives before the gale, kept afloat by the very force of the wind from behind, by the very heave of the sea from beneath. The instant the wind lulls and the sea ceases, down goes the ship to the bottom!

Not twelve months had Mr. Merkes been married before he had one of his old attacks. Something seriously the matter this time with his digestion; dyspepsia in good earnest now; fare being so much better, perhaps. Once he would have risen against the attack, resented it, resist-

ed it, contradicted it, defied it, driven it back. But prosperity had debilitated him; he yielded from the first. But he had whole hours of the common-sense and calm of heaven even before he entered its gateway.

“What a lunatic I have been, Anna!” he said to his weeping wife. “All my life—ever since I became a Christian at least—I have had an eternal heaven awaiting me, only a few years off at farthest; a reconciled and Almighty Father around me all the time, regarding me with infinite love and care; and yet I have all the way been tormenting and worrying myself about trifles. What a fool! Worse than that—what a sinner I have been in this!”

“We will be happy together hereafter,” sobbed his wife.

“Ha! I don’t know about that! What about the other Mrs. Merkes already there?”

The thought sprang up instantly in his mind. All the old thistle-seed hadn’t been purged from the soil yet. But the idea tormented him only a moment; the next he actually laughed aloud at his own folly, while his wife suspended her tears in wonder.

“What an amazing fool I have been!” continued the dying man. “All my life scourging myself like an old ascetic; putting pebbles in my own shoes; persisting in sleeping upon spikes; crying, and cutting myself with every stone in reach among the tombs. And this when I might have followed Jesus instead—might have lived instead a sweet, simple, natural life of childlike faith. If there is any palliation of my sin, it is that I permitted my troubles to craze me almost.”

And so Mr. Merkes falls into a gentle sleep, and his wife sits beside him and smooths with her soft touch the thin gray hair which has known so many cross-winds, and holds in her own the hand which has striven so many years with

the bramble and the brier. He has suddenly become younger in the face by twenty years. He murmurs, too, in his sleep, of "Lucy, Lucy." Mrs. Merkes knows well who he means, and that he has gone back to days long before he ever heard of *her*; but she swallows it down, blames herself for even the passing pang it gives her. And he wakes again to thank and kiss her for all her love and care, and so passes quietly into the world of eternal peace.

"And *now* what about the children?" asks Hoppleton as it comes back from the burying.

It has never occurred as a question to the widow. By this time George, Samuel, Alexander, have become to her really and truly "my boys." She has not cut out, and fitted, and played the mother to them so many months for nothing. Docile enough, poor things! previous discipline of their young lives had made them all that only too much. More spirit in them as well as docility these last few months. They are boys to be proud of. She knows, and they know, it is the doing of her hand, and she has not the least inclination to stop in her work. As to Mary, she is really her girl. "My girl," she loves to call her. None sweeter in Hoppleton. Hoppleton has told her so often enough, with many a "Who *would* have thought, Mrs. Merkes, you ever could have done so well!" Mary is devoted to her; for love inevitably creates love. The death of any one of the children could not have afflicted their own mother more. In fact, she grows to forget that she is not their mother—the children have almost forgotten any other themselves. Not for half an instant does Mrs. Merkes permit Bug to put on any airs in regard to them. To care for her children is now her only business in life. She accepts it as matter of course. She carries it out with energy and success.

"It's my opinion her marrying that man was the most sensible thing Nan ever did in her life," says practical Mr. Burleson one day to his stately wife.

"Do you really think so?" asks his wife. "You didn't at first, Mr. Burleson. I had no patience with her myself, as I told you and told her a thousand times, for wanting a husband. A woman at her age, too! It was indelicate; it was positively disgusting in her! We were differently constituted, I am sure. *I* never would have gone on as Anna did; I would have died first! But it is all done now. Poor thing! However, I am not sorry Mr. Merkes is dead."

"‘I will therefore that the younger women marry,’" Mr. Burleson reads from the Bible which lies on the table before him, "‘bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.’"

"Oh pshaw, nonsense!" says Mrs. Burleson. "And I am satisfied Anna never would have married him if it hadn't been for that terrible matter about little Lucy. And about that I've never been perfectly satisfied yet."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Thine Ears shall hear a Word behind thee, saying, This is the Way."

WHEN the young minister mounted his horse next morning, after an early breakfast, at his uncle's gate, he thought, as he rode off, that he had never seen so lovely a morning in all his life. An unusual light rested, to him, on the face of the world; there was a luxury in existence itself. Perhaps it was because he had risen so early; for the whole after-day is as in Eden to the man that rises with Adam and Eve before six. Perhaps it was because he had slept so soundly the night before. When he first lay down he began to think. He had arrested himself in the very outset of this, however. "You know perfectly well," he said to himself, "that if you begin to think you will continue to do so all night, rise in the morning worsted by it, and arrive at no result whatever by all your thinking." So, with grim determination, he had collared and carried himself to sleep forthwith.

Perhaps he owed something of the brightness of the morning, as he rode, to the quiet and pleasant conclusion of his mistake in regard to Miss Louisiana. The pain, and wondering how, and worriment that mistake had been to him! And all of it over now; and so naturally and pleasantly over, too! "Yes," he repeated to himself, "henceforth I will try day by day to do simply the duty the day actually brings with it, and let the morrow take care for the things of itself." One might as well be striking with hatchet and hammer at a star in the sky, attempting to

shape and tinker it, as to sweat and toil so in regard to the future. The star is not more completely beyond one's present reach than is the future, save as it is influenced by the manly doing to-day of to-day's duty. And it is wonderful how little of the low, dull pain of yesterday remains under the clear shining of the morning's sun.

As he rides he thinks of his old love; he sees her over again in every light in which he ever saw her before; he recognizes and does full justice to all that is beautiful in her; admires her as he would have done an exquisite wax-work in a glass-case and across a railing.

Perhaps his buoyancy of feeling this morning is the rapid growth, too, during the last few hours, of a hope sown long ago in his soul. He assumes, he revels in it as a certainty, he fairly exults as in absolute confidence. Of Burleson he has no fear. He knows, and Burleson knows, that in some way the young minister, brimful of defect though he be, has passed the young lawyer in the journey of life—has reached a higher level. The young lawyer knows it, with a sense of defiant indifference. The young minister unconsciously acknowledges it to himself, but only with humility and sense of wondering gratitude to the Power which has done it in him.

But he breaks suddenly away from all such vague meditations. He has a feeling of fresh purpose, new resolve, in his bosom this morning. He will enter on a system of regular pastoral visiting among his charge—will explore his field to its utmost limits, leave not a cabin unvisited, not an individual unapproached. And the children, too; he must establish a Sabbath-school before service every morning. As to the youth, can he not manage to collect them at some point one night in the week for a Bible-class? And there are the negroes. He must become a regular missionary among them; preach on one of the farms in his

charge every night in the week till he has gone the whole rounds. It is an admirable idea! He will lay it before the masters and mistresses next Sunday morning after sermon. No; he will preach a sermon on the subject, and then present his plan. A sermon? By-the-by, he ought to be preaching a regular series of elaborate sermons to his people. What shall the course be? The doctrines in their order? The prophecies? A good idea; he will enter upon it immediately! There are the Meggar boys, too, so wonderfully changed for the better since the funeral; he will spend a day or so with them this next week. Even Zed and Toad are possibilities with God! And how will it do, he asks himself, after a while, to write a book in the intervals of occupation? Not that he has any idea, just at this moment, what the book is to be about; all that he desires is to be, like Mr. Long, hard at work all the time. He has a new sense of exuberant power within him this morning—something has smitten open in him a new fountain of purpose. “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” What a text for a sermon! He will write it down while it occurs to him; and he draws his memorandum-book out of his breast-pocket, and with it an unopened letter.

“Well, I declare!” he says to himself; “the letter I took out of the Hoppleton office yesterday, just before I stepped into Burleson’s office! Never thought of it once since!” And so he checks Mike into a walk; opens and reads it. It is dated from the city he had once visited. Why, who? Why, what? He reads the letter hurriedly over once, thrusts it, all crumpled, back into his pocket, gives a hurrah, after glancing around to see, being a clergyman, that no one is in hearing, presses his heels against his horse’s flanks, and goes off into what Mr. Long would have styled a “lope” for a mile or two. He is only en-

deavoring to keep up with the beating of his heart. But he reins Mike up at last, ashamed of himself. "If I am so much carried away by a joy," he reasons with himself, "I would be equally by a sorrow." So he reads the letter gravely over again, from the "Rev. and Dear Sir" to the "Yours most respectfully"—in a very large hand too—"Alexander Jones."

Mr. Langdon's white-headed, ruddy-faced clerk! And it is all about Mr. Langdon's clerk's church enterprise there in the city. Of course! Mr. Wall is back again in the upper room of the engine-house, as he was that Sabbath morning months ago. He remembers how he got there that morning with Mr. Jones first of all. *Not* first of all; he remembers there was quite a group of persons waiting at the door for Mr. Jones with the key when they arrived. He recollects how rapidly the room filled with young men and young ladies, with a certain fresh, happy energy in their faces. These were the Sabbath-school teachers; and how the room swarmed with their pupils! A few of them evidently old hands at Sunday-school, from their sitting so near the desk, and looking so continually around on the others with a glad expression in their eyes, as of nutting or grape-gathering; and the other children—the extra composure of some proving as conclusively as the extra timidity of the others how entirely unused they were to the inside of such an institution—the very incomplete toilet of many confirming the same. And the cheerful alacrity of the teachers, and the warm friendship so evidently existing among them in their common work; good Mr. Jones, with his white hair and ruddy face all aglow, rubbing his hands as he contemplated the scene; a smile on his face as he, being superintendent, is consulted by a teacher, or a lingering of his hand about the shoulder and head of some new scholar just introduced. Mr. Wall remembers, too,

the children peeping in at the door of the room, whom no inducements could draw fairly in; and how, at last, Mr. Jones leaves the room with another friend near his own weight, goes down the other staircase, gets beyond and behind the crowd of street children, and then, abreast with his friend, walks slowly and resolutely up the stairway again with kindly word and motion, bearing the entire crowd before them and fairly into the room—not a lamb left unfolded.

And the appearance of the congregation as it assembled an hour or two later for worship—he remembers it perfectly. He can easily tell the leaders of the enterprise by their sitting so near the desk, and by their furtive glancing around to see what kind of attendance it was to be this morning; and by their aspect of entire satisfaction, too, when the room was actually crowded, even crammed. It was owing to Mr. Jones—that. Outside the door, with his beaming face and ready hand to show all comers in. Long after he knew certainly there was no seat to be had, he still waved the timid loiterers on the landing without to come in, come in!

And the singing too! All seemed to sing the sweetness and meaning of every syllable. And the prayers! He had never prayed with such quiet fervor before; the warm-hearted Christians were so near to him all around the little desk he could almost touch them with his extended hand, and he had such a certainty their hearts were beating with his in every sentiment and word. His text—he took it with such a sense of pleasure before him; told them all its meaning in such a quiet, common-sense, social manner. It was not like being high up in the grand pulpit of the other church—the congregation large and out of arm's-length before him. It was only as in a parlor full of personal friends.

The enterprise has flourished beyond all their expectation. Sabbath-school overflowing; prayer-meeting thronged; public services crowded. Would Mr. Wall cast in his lot with them as their pastor? And they had bought a suitable lot, too, for a church; and they had almost raised the money to build it. And what the gentlemen had done, and what the ladies had done, what the wonderful children were doing—it was a very long letter. It was not in the least an official document, so far as wording was concerned. Mr. Jones had written it with more pleasure than if it had been a letter to a lady he expected to marry—only there was no such lady in his case now—*she* had died before Mr. Jones's hair had whitened.

Accept it? “It is our unanimous wish—our very ardent desire. God has caused us all to set our hearts on *you* to lead us in carrying out our noble enterprise,” said Mr. Jones in his letter, and a page more to the same effect. “All of us engaged in the enterprise are young like yourself,” wrote white-haired Mr. Jones, “and we have a new field, a rapidly growing part of the city;” and Mr. Jones indulged in statistics in proof, but which were entirely unnecessary.

Accept the invitation? The tears rose to the young minister's eyes as he thanked God with all his soul for the opportunity of accepting! Alas for the Likens neighborhood! It dwindled into nothing before the great city with its wharves and warehouses, and thronging crowds and roaring energy. Work in the service of his Master—ample unbounded work! He exulted in the opportunity. Mr. Jones had said something about the salary—about its prospective increase. The young minister had skipped over both as altogether irrelevant while he read.

Accept it? Yes, most gladly!

And from the first opening of the letter one thought ran along with all his thoughts—a golden thread from end to end of the web—an essential part and portion of it all—John !

When Mr. Wall as last finds himself, and to his astonishment, at Mrs. General Likens's gate, he alights with a resolve to keep perfectly silent and quiet on this last subject for one whole week. It is all a form, he well knows. And Burleson knew it too from the instant his friend proposed it. "I am pledged to it," reasoned Mr. Wall to himself, as he tied his horse ; "and I am glad of it. I am too emotional altogether. It will be an admirable practice for me in calmness and silence. Ah, yes, that is the idea ! to write an elaborate and intensely logical discourse or two upon the best texts I can find ; let off all excess in that way. Besides, I have yet to pray for Divine direction in the matter." The thought came rather late. "And my uncle ?"

It is strange that he had not glanced once over his shoulder during the day to see if Burleson was not traveling the same road. He had not thought to do it once. And yet why should he ? When a thing is an inevitable thing, a matter-of-course thing—manifestly, undeniably so—people concerned about it unanimously admit it at last, whether they wish to do so or not.

CHAPTER XXXI.

An Announcement and a Reminiscence.

“**Y**OU were out very late last night again, Edward,” his mother had remarked to young Burleson at breakfast one morning before the week of truce had expired. “Where could you have been? Not at Colonel Mills’s?”

“Yes, Madam, at Colonel Mills’s,” replied her son, indifferently.

“Take care, Edward. People will say next you are addressing her,” said his mother.

“Let them say it, Madam. So I am,” is the cool reply. “My coffee, if you please.”

“Why, Edward!” exclaims Mrs. Burleson, with coffee-pot held in suspense. “You don’t really mean to say—”

“There is no use of any mystery about it. It isn’t worth it,” said the son, in a leisurely way. “Miss Loo and myself are engaged to be married. It happened two nights ago.”

“Happened?”

“Yes, Madam, happened; and, by-the-by, I wish you would tell my father about it. I hate to do so myself.” Practical Mr. Burleson had breakfasted and gone to his bank an hour before.

Yes, happened is precisely the word. On the night in question, while lounging in Colonel Mills’s parlor, the young lawyer, with a kind of gentlemanly nonchalance, had assumed that he and Miss Loo were to be married.

It came up quite incidentally in the course of an exceedingly desultory conversation.

“Law me, Mr. Burleson!” Miss Louisiana had exclaimed, with unbounded merriment; and afterwards, “Oh lawsy, the idea!” What beautiful lips and teeth!

When Hoppleton knew that the young lawyer and Miss Loo were actually engaged—which it did several weeks before it was really so—Hoppleton had said, “Oh, of course; every body knew that long ago.” Yes, it was inevitable; the matter-of-course result of their living together in the same village; quite in the natural order of events. There had been no special care or effort towards the result on either side. They had simply drifted together on the current of life—the two bubbles. It was the young lawyer’s own illustration.

“And do let us have it all over, if you please, as soon as possible,” he had remarked, in a somewhat wearied manner as he parted from Miss Loo last night.

Just six months ago to-night! Edward Burleson said to himself, the same evening, as he took a seat in his office coming back from his visit at Colonel Mills’s. Just six months ago! prizing off the lid of a fresh box of cigars as he repeated the words. “Just six months ago,” he added aloud, “since that night here with me! Hang my profession! I said that night, I consider myself, so does Anna and my mother and you too, a first-class man! I am serious, a first-class man in ability and education! Ambitious, too, as Lucifer. And, hang my profession! Do you think I am willing to drudge in a secondary position? What for? Money? I’ve got plenty of that already. Now—”

“Secondary? What do you mean?” his companion that night of half a year before had replied—if the reader will allow us to recall the conversation also.

“My dear fellow, is it all a *fiction*? I mean that every

speaker except the preacher has reference to the body not the soul—time, not eternity—in his efforts. I do believe you read, and think, and speak so much about these higher matters that you do not yourself fully realize the tremendous difference between the one set of things and the other. The *tremendous* difference, man !” and Burleson arose from his seat with strange excitement, his eyes sparkling with his thought.

“ You are right—over-familiarity with the awful reality of what we preach does dull our sense to its actuality. But human nature could not bear the strain of a full and steady conception of the fact of the soul, and eternity, and God—an eternal hell or heaven impending over each of us !” said Wall, after a pause, trying to grasp the facts, as he mentioned them. “ No,” he continued, after a long silence, “ too full and fixed a conception of these things would overwhelm one. Even the heathen with their paltry ideas of the Deity—you remember the story—how the nymph was consumed to ashes when the god, at her request, visited her in all his glory as a god.”

“ Well, what I was saying is this,” continued Burleson, leaning against the mantel ; “ in contrast with the occasional opportunities other men have of influencing men, remember that Sunday comes back once a week as steadily as the earth rolls. Every Sunday, if not all the people, yet just the moral and intelligent class, which is the soul and substance of the land, turn from every thing else, go to church and yield themselves up there to whatever the minister pleases to do with them, uninterrupted, uncontradicted or argued against, with all the authority of an ambassador from God Almighty, too, to address, sway, mould, move, melt, do any thing he pleases with them. What a chance ! Beg your pardon, Wall—didn’t mean it. And then a man is thoroughly trained, too, for this one purpose, has full time

from every thing else during the week to prepare himself for Sunday. Of course I would rather be a preacher, if I only had any purpose in life at all, than any thing else."

"You forget the poverty, the trials—"

"No I don't," interrupted Burleson. "Why, it's the dieting and rubbing of the race-horse that makes him thin as a flash that he may be as swift too. It's the starving down, and cuffing, and painful training of the pugilist, till every bone shows and every muscle stands out tense and strong as whipcord, ready for the ring. I wouldn't object to it for myself. It would etherealize, supernaturalize me for the work!"

"In which your one grand end would be your own glory. The more you do with your audiences so much the grander for you! No, sir, your idea of the profession is a human one, purely, and a natural one. I am ashamed to say it is exactly my idea, too, only, unlike you, I know it is all utterly false and wrong—*know* it perfectly well. No, sir, a true minister of the Gospel is a sinner whom God has regenerated and placed in the ministry for his glory and the benefit of men, not for the minister's own interest in any except an incidental way. He is not an orator to thunder away on splendid themes, only a messenger, an errand-bearer from God. All he has to convey to men is his message, his errand; nothing more, nothing less. His errand is a distasteful one to men, too. It is such a message that any hearing he gets for it, any the least attention paid by men to it—much more, any the least influence it has on men, is accomplished, not by the minister at all, only by the Holy Spirit. The man is only an instrument, say a trumpet, through which the Divine breath is made audible to men. As to the starvation training you speak of, it is the providence of God to fit ministers better for the pulpit."

“I dare say very little of a heavenly Father most ministers recognize in it! Look at that Mr. Merkes out here; waspish, nigh crazed his training has made him. Merkes blasphemes as bitterly as poor little Issells, the wicked tailor, only in a different way!” is Burleson’s reply. “I know the theory every preacher has of his office, but it makes me angry only to see how they evidently don’t believe in their own theory of it themselves—I mean practically. Suppose from long and painful experience they *have* lost all reliance in men, even in church members, as to their support, why don’t they have a living reliance in the God who sends them? I tell you, Wall, there is altogether too much doubt and despondency about men who profess to bear glad tidings of great joy to all people. Of all men in the world, such a man should be a Christian gentleman, looking down upon no man, looking up to no man either—frank and fearless, in the genial enjoyment himself of the message he bears. Your own uncle, Wall—why are there so few like him?”

“Thank you, Burleson, but you mustn’t forget that men are of different temperament. Besides, religion no more makes perfect ministers than it makes perfect laymen.”

“Why is it?” interrupted Burleson, who seemed full of the subject. “I do wonder, Wall, if Christianity can be all really, really *true*. No, *true* is not the word—really *so*! Do you really think there actually is the hell of Scripture, the heaven of Scripture, after death—really, now, as there is a London, a California? *Actual* places! pshaw, I can not express my idea.”

“Yes, Burleson,” said his companion, looking up at his friend with beaming eyes, his heart in his tones. “And that magnificent person, God Almighty, is a real individual, as real as you and I; and God the Holy Ghost, too, is a living agent, not a mere influence, a *person* who does act

on a man, make his home in a man ; and there really was, really is, a man, a living, breathing man, with hands and feet, eyes and lips and heart, a *man* named Jesus Christ, who actually was, actually is, God in flesh. His death for us, his ascension to heaven, his being really and truly alive this instant in heaven and on earth, all is really so ! I do believe it with all my soul !” continued Wall, slowly, feelingly, with tears in his eyes and his soul in his voice. “The facts, *facts*, Burleson, are glorious, are they not ? Is it not a magnificent business, we being commissioned of God to tell such facts to men ?”

“Yes, yes, I see it all, as clearly, perhaps, as you. You wouldn’t believe it, but there is nothing I think about more. It is so sublime, the whole of it. But I look on it all with my intellect, not a throb of the heart. I sit here late these winter evenings by myself—somehow the whole matter rolls before me like a grand panorama, every thing as vivid and brilliant, and I a mere spectator. I dare say no devil, no lost spirit, believes it much more clearly than I, only while I have as little personal interest in it as these, I haven’t any of their remorse or misery. No spectator of Lear or Hamlet could be more interested in the tragedy playing on the stage before him than I am in this ; nor feel less personal concern, I mean concern about his own personal connection, relative to the tragedy, than I do in the tremendous drama of Christianity now being played upon the boards of the universe. It is a singular thing,” continued Burleson as if to himself, “but in regard to religion I am perfectly alive here,” placing his hand on his brow. “The most devoted Christian can not possibly have clearer conceptions than I have. I have these as distinct as human nature can endure. I often have to force my mind from the hell, the heaven, the crucified God of the Bible, for fear of consequences. Yet all the time during

my fullest, clearest views I am stone dead here ;” and he laid his hand on his bosom with the calmness of one stating a singular scientific fact.

“ Will you do me a favor, Burleson ?” asked his companion eagerly, after a long silence.

“ Certainly,” replied Burleson with surprise. “ What is it ?”

“ It is that you will kneel down with me—we are all by ourselves—in your office here to-night, and, just as well as you can, accompany my words with your thoughts—heart if you can.” And without waiting for his companion to refuse, the impetuous friend solemnly knelt beside the chair on which he had been seated. A half-smile rested upon the face of Burleson ; but he knelt at a chair near by, without hesitation. In low tones his friend prayed for him, addressing God as if he held his mantle while he prayed. He laid the case of his friend in simplest earnestness of entreaty before the Almighty. For one thing only he asked ; the descent of the Spirit of God, then, there, upon his friend ; the living, personal Agent. There was a passion, an eloquence of entreaty of one who saw the whole disease, the one remedy. Tears streamed in silent, uninterrupted flow as he prayed, and his companion knelt still, attentive to every syllable. But when they arose to their feet, Burleson returned his gaze with the same calm smile upon his face. “ Yes, it is very singular indeed,” he said, seating himself in a chair, crossing his legs and leaning back with his hands clasped together behind his head, “ very singular indeed. Thank you, Wall : no good—not the least. It is as interesting and as singular a case as I ever met with.” It was entirely as if he were talking of some other person. “ I have my theory about it. The Holy Ghost, you know, produces all spiritual feeling in a man—all of it—every bit ! Now, He did once produce all

this feeling in me. I remember it distinctly ; but you know my history. He has withdrawn entirely from me, and forever—my opinion is. I often think about it. I declare it is one of the strongest proofs I know, that that doctrine, at least, of religion is true !”

How it all comes back, as he sat there in the gathering darkness ! Six months ago !

As the successful lover sat smoking a final cigar over the matter in his office, before retiring to bed, the interview between himself and the young minister rose vividly before him. “There is that man,” he said to himself, “has entered on his life’s work with a will. How contented, happy, exultant he is in it ! Growing stronger and heartier and more efficient for every blow he strikes—even for every blow he receives. If I only could be satisfied now that the whole theory of Christianity is false—but to save my life I can’t ! Engaged wholly and directly in God’s work (I do wonder, by-the-by, whether there actually *is* such a Person, such an Individual as—God !) is the way *he* reasons. Yes. Spending his time and energies in benefiting all men within his influence ; making them better and happier here ; accomplishing their rescue from eternal wickedness and misery hereafter ; effecting their entrance on an eternity of purity, and consequent bliss. Doing this, too, according to a God-appointed method of work—a method successful in the case of millions now in heaven, successful in his own experience in the business so far. What a magnificent occupation for a man ! What an infinite reward such a man’s business is to himself, even here in this world—and heaven afterwards ! Happy ? I don’t blame you ! A small salary ? All sorts of hardships in it ? If I only could actually be such a man, in such a business !” And he gave force to his feelings by an oath aloud.

“Yes; he and John to walk together through life!” he continued to himself. “They in their path; I and Loo—I mean Loo and I—in ours! Is it absolutely impossible? Suppose I make an effort to teach Loo something above eating and dressing? In making a desperate effort of the kind for her I might save myself. Oh, hang it, no! What a fool you are to dream such a thing! She weighs fifty pounds too much for that. Getting to be her father and mother over again! Well, Loo, we will have an easy time of it till we die, anyhow. When we reach the other world we’ll take our chances—that is all! Dare say it’ll all be right!”

“But, Edward,” his mother remarks at that breakfast-table, “there was John—I thought—” anxiously too.

“She was going to marry me?” asked her son. “Not exactly. She and Wall are to marry, I believe.” And the young lawyer swallowed, as he spoke, the contents of his cup—and a good deal more besides. The keen black eyes of the mother saw it all.

“What a pair of fools!” she says, indignantly.

“In what sense?” asks her son.

“Both poor—not a cent in the world,” says his mother, who feels relieved, too, as somewhat avenged thereby.

“I beg your pardon,” says her son, coolly. “Old General Likens and his wife have willed John all their property. No one else in the world to leave it to—because she was born under their roof—because they took a fancy to her—I hardly know why. I made out the will for them myself before the old General died. I do believe,” said the young lawyer, leaning back in his chair as the thought struck him, “they hoped, intended she should marry *me*, and swell said property. Queer idea! I had a passing notion of it from their manner at the time I wrote the will. Singular notion! And Wall. One would have supposed

they would have wanted *them* to marry. But no. The old lady is violently opposed to it. Singular how people—good, pious people—value property as they grow old. Not for themselves—for their young people. So we go!”

“Your friend is a sharper individual than I had supposed,” began the mother, quite sarcastic, from love to her son.

“You are altogether mistaken,” interrupted the son. “Wall is as perfectly ignorant of it as Bug out there in the yard. The heiress herself is as much so. No, Madam. Old people, like the General and his wife, hold on to every cent of their property to the last instant of their life, whoever is to have it after that—never hint any thing to diminish their full hold upon it. No; they love each other—John and Wall—without a thought of the future—a pair of green goslings—and see how Providence provides for such goslings! I declare, I do believe Heaven actually *does* care and contrive for just such people!”

If such people could only have a fixed faith to that effect themselves! Poor Mr. Merkes!

CHAPTER XXXII.

In which one of us enters into a Heaven of Rest, and two others of us into a Heaven of Work.

AND so the week of truce rolled away. One day of it the young minister devoted to answering Mr. Jones's letter. No poem ever written with more hearty goodwill. The same afternoon the text is selected. One which he has not specially observed before, and of the full meaning of which he is ignorant, is selected as requiring that much more thought. And, hard at it, with concordance and examination of parallel passages, he goes early next morning. It requires considerable effort. Hardly has he looked at the text than it is plain he must have Mr. Bob Long's assistance therein; so a night is spent by him at the cabin of that gentleman in untying an Hebraic knot of Gordian toughness, with one or two lesser ones in the Greek Testament by way of refreshment after labor. Mr. Long makes no allusions to Miss Araminta Allen. The topic is too portentous—but there is a solemnity in his tones, and a peculiar manner in handling his beloved books, as of one soon to enter upon other and awful duties.

All the family are, meanwhile, alarmed for the mistress of the household. While the minister toils in his chamber, which is also his study, they anxiously watch Mrs. General Likens. Even Anaky the cook has long since ceased to provoke her old mistress; and it is hard to do, for such has been Anaky's course of life for thirty years. It worries Mrs. General Likens to have the servants so un-

usually active and obedient; it gives her that much the less to do. As to John, she had, very quietly, intimated her willingness to close her school for a while in order to be at home with her.

“But what *for*, child?” asked Mrs. General Likens, promptly—sharply, even. “You don’t think I’m sick, I hope? I’m strong enough—raised on a farm, you see. As to the General, I was expectin’ it. No, child, you go to your school; don’t you mind me. But there’s one thing I *must* tell you, child,” she adds, after quite a silence. “I’ve wanted to do it for months—have started to do it a dozen times, but it was *too* awful. We are alone now,” adds the old lady, lowering her voice and rising to see that the door of their chamber is shut, for it is as they are about lying down at night. “I shudder to tell even you. It never happened to the General, in full at least, till after that awful night Uncle Simeon raved—you remember it—about blood and burnin’. It wouldn’t then, only the General’s understanding had grown weak-like in that matter before. I know you won’t breathe it to a soul. It would kill me dead if I thought people dreamed of a syllable of it. It would blacken the General’s name forever, because people couldn’t understand he was out o’ his head when he thought it, as I could. It was part of the disease that killed him—he was so perfectly sensible ’cept in that. An’ it act’ly reconciled me to his death some, I’d all the time such a deathly terror he might let it out; you see it was *growin’* on him. He thought slavery—the ownin’ our own black ones—was a wrong thing, almost a sin!” added Mrs. General Likens, her lips to John’s ear, and in accents of horror. “It’s weighed on my mind dreadful! He was *crazy*, an’ couldn’t help it, you know.”

As they endeavored to compose themselves to sleep, exhausted by this fearful revelation, Mrs. General Likens

added, "I'm afraid you won't be able to sleep a wink to-night thinkin' of it, but I *had* to tell you. He was deranged, you know—not responsible like; an' it nigh drove *me* crazy, too, to think of it. But try an' go to sleep if you can. I feel very tired to-night."

And so John would, day after day, very reluctantly draw on her deep sun-bonnet, and take her way to school along the well-known path through the woods. There were sorrowful thoughts as she passed along. There were trickling tears within the sun-bonnet too, as John thought of the mistress of the household, so emaciated yet restless—so desolate yet defiant. And her own future, also. But the shadowy cloud soon broke, and the tears speedily rolled away before the shining of a young and happy heart. The philosophy of it is so simple: God—the all-powerful, the ever-present, the infinitely-loving One—this Person smiles upon me, reconciled to Him in His Son, now and forever. Clouds will float between—misty nothings—but He smiles upon me forever and ever. How can one's heart but reflect such shining? Not that she reasoned on the subject—thought definitely upon it. If asked, she could not have defined matters, perhaps. Unasked, she simply enjoyed herself as the birds do the sunshine—enjoyed herself all the more for taking all things as bright matter of course.

And so the days passed away; and Mrs. General Likens is passing away with them. Only chains, however, would have kept her in bed after daybreak. But she came to sit down oftener and longer at a time than before. At last she can not leave her chair but for brief intervals, so old she seems—so very old. And the week of truce has gone long ago. John's vacation has come, and she stays in the house with Mrs. General Likens now all the time. The days pass by, and no one is surprised—not even the young-

est negro on the place—that midnight hour, when they crowd into the room and see their mistress die—die in her sleep, unconscious of the loud weeping of her servants, unconscious of the prayer of the young minister, who kneels by her bed commending her departing soul to God.

“Ah, yes, you needn’t say a word about it,” she had remarked the very afternoon before, as she sat propped up in her arm-chair, to John and Mr. Wall. “I said long ago to you, child, don’t you never marry a minister. But, bless you, I knew it was no use at the very time. It was my seein’ Mr. Merkes so much—troubles he an’ his wife had. But what is it all at last? James is there; Uncle Simeon, he is there; Mrs. Merkes, she’s got there; General, he is there. I’ll be there soon. An’ you two’ll follow. What does it matter, the little while one’s got to be in this world? Bein’ a Christian, bein’ ready to go—that’s the only thing to care for. An’ my poetry, too; astonishin’ how people gets wrapped up in sech little things of this world! This I can’t help sayin’—there were pieces I wrote which I *know* were good—if I could only read you a few lines— Ah, never mind! You’ve been a great help to me, children. The General he fixed up matters before he died. Never had much to say, the General, but he was a sensible man. You are welcome to each other; it’s the Lord’s doin’.”

And a smile passed over her face, the first since the General’s death, as her young pastor, holding John’s hand in his all this time, now passes his arm around John’s waist, draws her gently to his side, and presses a kiss upon her cheek. And, smiling through her tears, John certainly never did look, in all her life before, quite so beautiful as then.

“Not the first, I reckon; an’ mighty far from bein’ the last,” says Mrs. General Likens, smiling her approval.

“ You know I was a girl onst ; led the General a dance of it, I tell you. Yes, a real torn-down piece I was ! An’ time was, only a little ago, I could have made a mighty pretty quire or so of poetry upon you two—rhyme, not blank verse, either. And, I don’t *know* it, mind, but I wouldn’t be surprised if I make poetry in heaven—so many to read it to there—perhaps for ever an’ ever ! But never mind about that. Mr. Wall here ain’t his uncle, child. Never can get to be such a man. Mighty imperfect. A thousan’ things will be comin’ up in him every day for you to correct, child. Mind you do your duty by him. The men need us dreadful. Paul—they tell me he was a widower,” Mrs. General Likens adds, after quite a silence, and more feebly. “ But I suppose Timothy he had a wife. An’ Peter we know had ; always in somethin’ *he* was ; time of it she must have had ! Good wife’s mighty necessary for a minister. An’ *some* money, if possible ! If you don’t do well havin’ John here along, Mr. Wall, I’m mistaken ! Don’t you ever tell a soul, child, that I told you about the General an’ his queer notions about the black ones ; it would ruin him here forever. Only part of his last sickness that was. But,” adds Mrs. General Likens, very wearily indeed, “ I’m a little tired of talkin’ to-night. Yes, the General he fixed up things. Tell you more about it all to-morrow.”

THE END.





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